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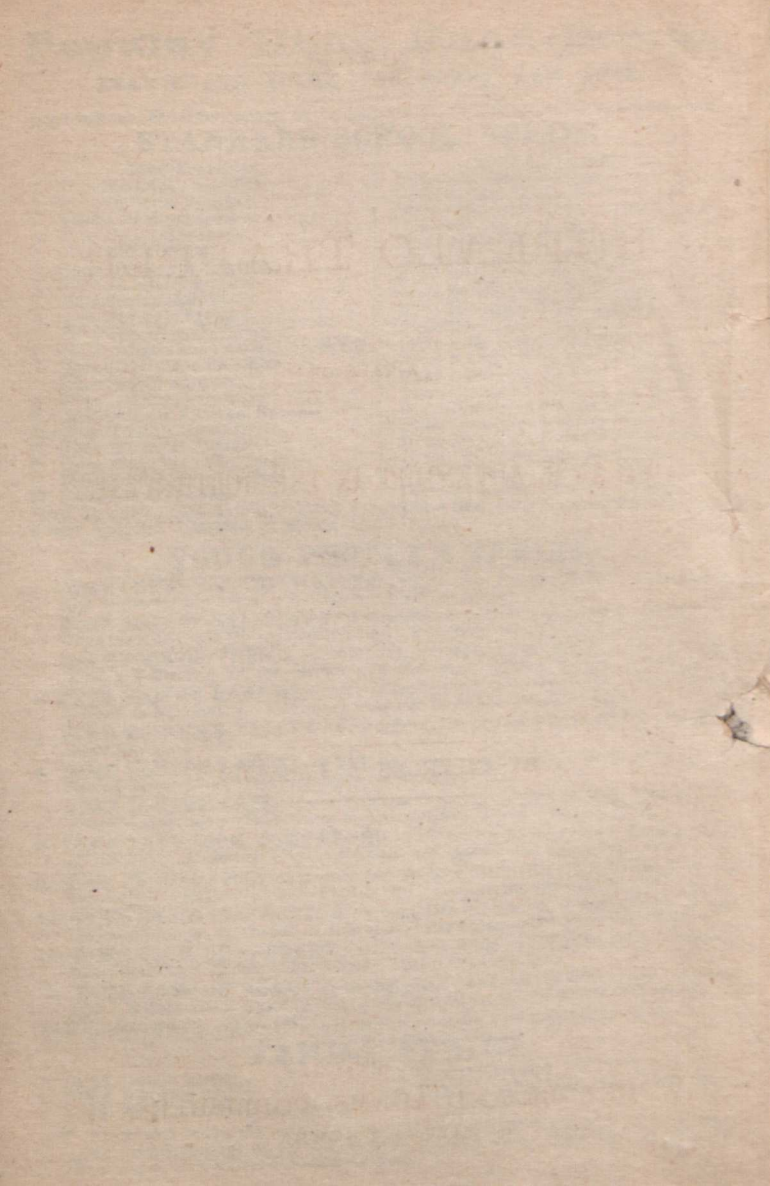
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THE
BUFFALO-TRAPPER.

A TALE OF

STRANGE ADVENTURE IN THE NORTH-WEST.

BY CHARLES E. LASALLE.

NEW YORK:
BEADLE AND ADAMS, PUBLISHERS,
98 WILLIAM STREET.

THE
BUTTERFIELD
A TALE OF
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BY CHARLES K. LARSEN

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THE BUFFALO-TRAPPER

CHAPTER I.

A MARVELOUS YARN.

THE storm was raging, and the wind was beating against the panes and slamming the shutters of the "Travelers' Rest," a small tavern that stood at the end of one of the border villages of Missouri; and on this same tempestuous night, there was quite an assemblage gathered here, smoking, drinking, chatting, and enjoying themselves after the manner characteristic of such assemblages.

A fire crackled upon the huge hearth of the fireplace, and the air was thick with the smoke of the numerous clay pipes that were in the mouths of the different individuals in the apartment. Some were stretched out upon benches, some were seated in chairs tipped back against the wall, while the corpulent landlord was perched behind his bar among his bottles and villainous compounds, sound asleep.

There were three men present, upon this same night, with whom we have something to do, and who, at the time we introduce them to our readers, were total strangers to each other.

The first of these was known as "WAUFY," a ponderous man, of broad shoulders and Herculean frame, with grizzled hair, long, grizzled beard, that grew almost up to his very eyes, with a face scarred and seamed by wounds and exposure, small, twinkling gray orbs as keen as a lynx's, tremendous muscular development, and a physique that would attract attention anywhere.

He was tipped back in his chair, with one leg thrown over another, and each incased in enormous high-reaching boots, while the upper part of his body was covered with a great-coat made of bear-skin. A coon-skin cap rested upon one knee, while, assuming as easy a position as possible, he smoked

his short black pipe, and amused the company with stories of his past life.

"Waufy" was one of the most noted trappers of the border, and his experience was an eventful one. He was a man without any family, and as it was about late enough for him to be thinking of starting for the beaver-runs again, he had come from somewhere in the interior to wait at the "Travelers' Rest" for the storm to subside before starting on his perilous journey to the Far West.

Nearly opposite to Waufy sat a young man, dressed in partly military costume, who, during the early part of the evening, had busied himself in examining some maps and charts in his possession, but who had laid them aside, and was listening to but not joining in the conversation around him.

This young man had ridden up just as it was dark, and dismounting from his horse he had entered the bar-room, and asked if any one had been there inquiring for him.

"Who are *you*?" asked the landlord, surveying him with no little curiosity.

"I am Lieutenant Putnam, of Colonel McHavens' Exploring Party."

"You are, eh? What are you doing here, then, when they've been gone over a month out on the peraries?"

"I was sent as a bearer of dispatches to Washington, and am now on my return. An escort was to meet me here, but I see nothing of them."

"There hasn't been any escort here, nor any one asking for you."

"That settles *that* point, then," said the young officer, as he bowed; "they were to be here on the eighteenth, and to-day is the twentieth, so that they are behind time."

"How many of 'em were there to be?"

"Only three, as Colonel McHavens could not spare any more. I will wait here a day or two, and then if they don't appear I will go it alone."

And so Lieutenant Willard Putnam made himself as comfortable as possible, and sat quietly listening to the rude and ignorant men around him, for the simple reason that he could find nothing better to do.

The third man was as different from the other two, of whom we have spoken, as they were from each other. He also was tipped back in his chair, but he was smoking no pipe or cigar, and was doing a considerable part of the talking, although he had not seen one of the company until this evening.

When standing erect, Jabez Spikes was fully six feet in height, very thin, lank and active, with a peaked nose, clean-shaven face, that was very red, with yellow, sandy hair, and the sharp, wide-awake look of the genuine "Yankee." He was dressed in a long, yellow, buck-skin coat, corduroy pants cut very close to the skin, and wore a very tall black silk hat with a very narrow rim, and with its nap brushed the wrong way. He also had on a flaming red neck-tie, and was one of those men who are at home in any part of the world.

Jabez Spikes was a man who, had Queen Victoria offered him her hand to kiss, would have given it a hearty gripe and shaking, and inquired how she was getting along; who would have slapped Pius IX on the shoulder, and asked for a chew of tobacco, and would have left Vesuvius in disgust if it didn't "bile over" for his edification.

Jabez was at home; he had his jokes and yarns to tell, and became quite a favorite with the company. Even the grave, handsome face of Lieutenant Putnam relaxed into a smile more than once, as he listened to his quaint comicalities and ludicrous experiences, and he answered every question put to him with a ready frankness that was pleasing to all.

It was easy to see, from the actions of all the parties, that Wauffy, the hunter, was a favorite *raconteur* with them. After considerable preliminaries and badinage, he finally settled down into the recital of the following singular narrative:

"Boys," said he, "I s'pose there's some of you that remember 'Lije Havens, that used to trap with me something like ten year ago."

Quite a number replying in the affirmative, he continued:

"He was about as tall, and slender, and good-lookin' as that chap with the tall hat, a-settin' back there by the door. Wal, me and him hunted together fur a long time, and it was nigh onto ten year ago that we got into the scrape I prepose to tell you about.

"We'd been up on the Yallerstone, and had had such good luck that we got ready to start fur the States two or three weeks sooner than usual. I remember there was plenty of snow pretty low down on the mountains, and here and there we could find a patch of it on the open perairie.

"We had two hosses loaded down with the peltries, besides a powerful heap on the animals we war ridin', so that ef we could only git into Westport or Independence with 'em, we war sartin of makin' a good thing of it.

"Wal, we started, and hadn't got fairly out from among the mountains, when we found the varmints war as thick as fleas all about us. It seemed that nearly all the warriors among the Blackfeet war on the move, 'goin' to fight some of the other tribes, and afore we knowed it we had crossed their path.

"Sign got so plenty that we halted and rackynoitered, and it didn't take long to find out that we war in jist the biggest kind of fix you ever dreamed of. I see'd there was no chance of gittin' out with the skins, so I told 'Lije we'd have to *cache* the peltries. We hadn't time to dig a reg'lar *cache*, so we rammed 'em in among a lot of rocks, where we covered 'em up as best we could.

"We jist had time to do that and no more, when, *slap-bang* went a dozen guns, and *ki-yi!* screeched a dozen throats, and we war in fur it. I see'd two of our hosses keel over, and the bullets sung round our ears powerful peart, now I tell yer.

"'Lije was built handy for runnin', and there weren't many that could overhaul me, where I had a fair chance, and the way the dirt flew from our heels was a caution to mad bufflers. Both of us got nipped two or three times by their lead, but not 'nough to stop us, and as there was purty good cover all around, we soon give the slip to the red-skins that were sailin' down on us the hardest, and got a chance to wink and draw a breath or two.

"As soon as we dared to speak, we held a council of war, and made up our minds that the best thing we could do was to get out of them quarters the quickest way we knowed how, for the varmints war so powerful plenty that there wa'n't much chance of our keepin' out of their way fur twenty-four hours' hard runnin'.

"There's one thing that was good fur us: it was late in the afternoon, and we had only an hour or two's dodgin' to do to get a chance to turn ourselves. We could hear the Blackfeet yelpin' and signalin' all 'bout us, and I can tell you it was hard work to keep our tracks so covered up as to give us a show fur our scalps.

"When it got fairly dark, 'Lije and me concluded that the best thing we could do fur each other was to separate, and each look out fur himself, as there was a powerful sight more chance that way than by keepin' together.

"So we slid apart, and I hadn't no time to think of 'Lije, fur the varmints war everywhere. As I hadn't any chance of gettin' away from the varmints without a good animal to ride, I made up my mind to get the skunks off my scent entirely, and to lay by till the storm had blowed over.

"So when I found a little stream of water that come down from the mountains, I jist stepped into that and follered it down fur a hundred yards or more, fur I knowed there was no follerin' my trail through *that* stream. It was purty hard trampin' through there, pitchin' over the stones, droppin' down *kerchug* into the water up to your middle, when it was as cold as get out, too; but when a man is walking fur his scalp, he ain't noways partic'lar as to the pavement he treads.

"When I was walkin' down-stream, I had to keep a sharp look-out fur the varmints, and I was jist gittin' ready to git out the water, when you'd better b'lieve I got scared; fur right there, in the water afore me, I see'd the quarest animal you ever heard tell of."

"Please describe him," called out Jabez Spikes, the rim of whose hat was so narrow that he could lean his head back against the wall without disturbing it. "I'm quite interested, by ginger if I ain't!"

"Wal, sir, he looked jist like these picters of polar bears, and that's what I thought he was at first—"

"Couldn't been that," interrupted Spikes, "that isn't their native clime."

"Nobody said it was," growled Waufy; "that's what he *looked* like; he was a big animal, and as white as snow. He was standin' right in the middle of the stream, with his head turned toward me. I stopped with my shootin'-iron, but

the varmints was too thick fur me to fire onless I had to so I walked slowly toward him, swinging my arms and makin' a big splashin' so as to drive him away.

"He never stirred till I was near 'nough to spit a mouthfull of tobacco-juice in his eyes, when he gave a snort, dropped his head, made a heavy jump up the bank, and galloped away, and then I see'd what he was."

"What was it?" asked Lieutenant Putnam, who was absorbed in the narrative. The hunter turned his head toward the handsome young officer, and answered, respectfully :

"*A white buffler!*"

"By ginger! I never heerd of such a thing!" exclaimed Jabez Spikes, tipping his chair forward, and clapping his hand upon his knee. "You're sure of that, be you? Have you ever seen him since?"

"Jist hold on; I ain't done with the critter yet. I stood still in the stream till the buffler was out of sight, when I picked my way a little further down and then stepped ashore.

"I was purty cold and stiff, when I got on dry land again, fur I tell you there was ice in that water. I was standin' on pebbles, where ef I only moved careful like, I could keep as el'ar of leaving a trail as the young fawn. I kept on these pebbles till I reached a clump of trees, when I shinned up one of 'em, like a squirrel. You see I thought I'd stay there till there was a chance of gettin' out this muss, so I twisted up among the limbs, to set still and listen.

"I knowed the varmints war lookin' fur me, fur I could hear 'em whistlin' and signalin' to each other, and they war all around me. While I sot there, intendin' to keep awake, I found I was gettin' sleepy, and I had good reason fur it, you bet. Two nights afore I had n't slept more nor two hours, and the night afore 'Lije and me had been up all night gettin' the peltries ready, and it wa'n't no use; I dropped off to sleep.

"It all went well 'nough fur an hour or two, when I woke up with a *chill*, and was so powerful stiff that I thought I was froze stiff sure; but I managed to draw my legs out of the limbs when, afore I knowed it, I tumbled over and dropped down out the tree.

"As I was goin' down, I noticed something white under

me, and I s'posed it was a bank of snow, and I remember I thought there wasn't much chance of gettin' hurt, so I wasn't scart much.

"Down I come plump—not onto the snow, but onto the back of the white buffler, that I s'pose was passing under the tree at the time. Wal there! I've rid the wildest mustangs that ever broke a man's neck, but that was the greatest ride yet. The moment I struck the critter I knowed what it was, and I slung myself 'round as quick as lightning, got a straddle of him, and hung onto his mane.

"The buffler I think was somewhat *surprised*," continued Waufy, in his quizzical way; "he stood still a minute, as if to think what was best to do. Then he give a big snort, threw his head down and his tail up, and away he went like mad.

"You'd better b'lieve I hung on, and the critter went like chain-lightnin'. I cotched glimpses of the varmints as we whizzed along, and *crack, bang* went their guns as we tore by them, and some of the bullets come *rather* close; but the buffler never stopped, but went ahead like a harrycane.

"Over the stuns and bowlders he went till he got where the perarie was more level, and then he let himself out. I doubt whether any of the varmints chased us; but, if they did, I know it didn't do no good, for that buffler went like the White Horse of the Peraries.

"I held on as best I could, and I s'pose I rode near a mile, when the critter give such an onexpected shy at somethin' that I rolled off t'other side, and laid on the ground till daylight. When I come to, there I was, with no peltries, no hoss, and no gun. It would 've gone purty hard with me if 'Lije hadn't found me 'bout noon. He had been smarter nor me, 'fur he had held fast to his gun, and had managed to get hold of an Indian hoss that war a powerful sight better nor both of ours. I got on with him, and we had a purty rough time, but we hung round the neighborhood till the varmints had cleared out, when we cotched some more hosses, dug out our *cache*, and got our furs to the States all right."

CHAPTER II.

A BRILLIANT SPECULATION.

THE hour grew late. The neighbors who had dropped in to the "Travelers' Rest," gradually dropped out again, until, besides the landlord, only the three individuals who have been introduced to the reader, remained.

They became quite sociable and well acquainted with each other, and when Jabez Spikes made a move for retiring, he was assigned the same room with Waufy the trapper, while Lieutenant Putnam was allowed a room to himself.

"This arrangement suits me extensively," remarked Spikes, as they prepared to follow the landlord, with his two stumpy candles in hand. "I have something highly important to say to Mr. Waufy in private."

"Waufy," looked as if he did not comprehend what his room-mate meant; but he followed along without comment, while Lieutenant Putnam bade them good-night at the head of the stairs and went to his own apartment.

Spikes waited till he and the hunter were in the room, and the door fastened. Somewhat to the surprise of both, they saw two beds at their disposal.

"Stiggins is puttin' on airs," said Waufy, after looking around the room for several minutes. "I'm glad he done it, 'cause it might be dangerous for you to sleep with me."

"Why so?" asked Jabez in astonishment.

"I git to dreamin' sometimes; the other night I thought the Blackfeet war comin' down on me sure, and I set up a yell, smashed the head-board, and threw the wash-stand out the window afore I woke."

"Do you think you'll go into the wholesale dream business, to-night?" asked Spikes, in some alarm.

"No; I feel kinder peaceable; if I should get in my tantrums and raise the war-whoop, the best thing you kin do is to jump out the window; you'll be apt to land on your legs, while if you take *t'other* way, you'll be purty sure to strike

head-first, and if you have on that stove-pipe, it might get bruised."

"Shouldn't wonder if it would," replied the New-Englander, as he very carefully removed his head-covering, and as carefully brushed the nap in the wrong direction, and restored it to his head again.

"See yer," said Waufy, "you said you had somethin' to say to me."

"Yes."

The trapper took a seat on the side of his own bed, so as to hold an easy position, while Jabez Spikes pushed his stove-pipe back from his head, jammed his hands deep down in his pockets, and paced back and forth across the room.

"Yes, sir," he added, as he looked down at the bare floor in front of him, as he walked over it. "I have something highly important to converse and consult and advise with you upon."

"Go ahead," responded the somewhat impatient trapper.

"I listened with an absorbing interest to the narrative which you recited a while ago, in which a white buffalo played such a conspicuous and highly prominent part. I was very much interested indeed in it, and now I want to propound an interrogatory, to which I desire a truthful response."

"Propound away."

Spikes stopped short and faced him.

"Did you ever see a really *white buffalo*?"

"Yes, sir, I have, and so 've other hunters."

"That's honest and true, now?"

"In course it is," replied Waufy, who seemed somewhat interested in his eccentric companion.

"Have you seen that *same* white buffalo since that first interesting occasion you mentioned?"

"Think I have, but wouldn't swear to it. Two years arter me and 'Lije see'd five bufflers, one morning, croppin' grass near the same place, and one of 'em was as white as milk. We both concluded he was the same critter, but we couldn' be sartin."

"What's become of your companion on that occasion?"

"Do you mean 'Lije?"

"I believe that is the cognomen by which he was designated."

"'Lije' went under 'bout five years ago," replied Waufy, with something like sadness in his voice.

"Killed by aboory-gines, I s'pose?"

"What kind of engines is that?"

"In-jines."

"Then why don't you call 'em by thar right names—red-skins, or varmints? No; we got cotched in a tearin' big snow-storm, and 'Lije' couldn't fight it through; he and his hoss both went under; but I hain't heerd what you had to ax me?"

"In the first place, do you imagine, or suppose, or think that that same identical white buffalo is still alive?"

Jabez was in earnest, and he gesticulated quite excitedly in the face of the hunter, as he spoke, while the latter replied with his usual coolness.

"Wal, that's anuther thing that I couldn't sw'ar to. He mought be alive, and ef he is, he's purty old and rather stiff in the j'int's by this time."

"I'm glad to hear that; it will be all the better for me."

"What yer drivin' at?"

"See yer, Mr. Waufy," said Jabez, approaching still closer, and sinking his voice to a confidential whisper, "I'm out on a speculating tower, and I see here a stupendous fortune."

Waufy's countenance proved that he still failed to see the point.

"Don't you take? It's this: I'm going to catch that white buffalo, and take him round the country as a show. Just think how it would go!"

And springing round in his excitement, Spikes drew an imaginary poster on the wall with his finger, reading the words as he traced them:

"The Phenomenon of the Age! The Wonder from the West! A Genuine Snow-White Buffalo from the Rocky Mountains of the West, now on Exhibition at ———. Admission \$1; Children, double price, etc."

"What do you think of that?" demanded Jabez, dancing about the floor in his excitement, and swinging his hat; "won't that make my fortune? Won't it run like wildfire? Why I

shall ride down to the remotest lapse of time, to undying fame, on the back of a white buffalo. By ginger, I'll hang on, too; he can't throw me like he did you. Yes, sir, that's the programme. What do you think of that, Mr. Waufy?"

The trapper hardly knew what he thought. His breath was fairly taken from him by the burst of excitement in his companion. The idea of carrying a white buffalo round the country and charging to see him, was entirely new to him.

Suddenly he brightened up.

"Why don't you take a *green* buffler?"

"There ain't any such thing, is there?"

"No; but thar's plenty of *green paint* in the country, ain't thar?"

The New-Englander solemnly shook his head.

"That would be a fraud, and *I* could never engage in any such business. I might have made my fortune long ago, if I would have descended to such business. And then it wouldn't work any way; a blue or green buffalo is an impossibility, as much as a blue or green-haired man, and I should be discovered and my character gone. No, no; that wouldn't do."

"There's one thing in the way," said Waufy.

"What's that?" was the eager query.

"Afore you kin make your money off that buffler, you must catch him."

"That's so," replied Spikes, jamming his hands again into his pockets, and pacing back and forth. "I s'pose he'll have to be *lassoed*."

"Lasso thunder!" muttered the trapper. "I'd like to see you or anybody else lasso a buffler."

"Then what can you do?"

"I'll be hanged ef I know, onless you git him away from the rest of 'em and drive him here."

"Mr. Waufy," said Jabez, stopping squarely in front of him again, "how soon are you going into the trapping territory again?"

"As soon as the weather settles, I start with my two hosses."

"What do you want of two?"

"One to ride, and the other to help bring back the peltries."

"I see; well, now, what do you say to my going with you?"

Waufy had been expecting this, but, before making a reply, he scrutinized the Yankee from head to foot and back again.

"Have you ever been on the peraries?"

"Never was as fur west in my life."

"What brought you here?"

"By ginger if I know. I've been tryin' my hand at every thing, and done only middling well, and I come out here to see what the prospects were of my acquiring a suitable fortune, and here I am."

"Have you got a good hoss?"

"A splendid one; a magnificent rifle, and a stupendous pair of pistols. Oh! I'm all ready for a campaign," said Jabez, quite proudly.

"Thar is other things besides bufflers out there," said the trapper, a moment afterward.

"What's them?"

"Injins—and the worst kind, too."

"Oh! I know that; I think I'll lasso one of them, too, and have him as the keeper of the white buffalo. How will *that* do? But what do you say to my going with you?"

"You kin go."

"All right then; that settles it. Now to bed."

As the massive hunter lay in bed, listening to the terrific snoring of Jabez Spikes, he reflected upon what he had done. He had consented to take as his companion upon a most perilous journey, a man who was a complete novice in Indian ways, and who, for the sake of accomplishing what might well be regarded as an impossibility, would sacrifice his life.

But the original and eccentric ways of the Yankee pleased the hardy old hunter, and not a little to his own surprise, he took quite a liking to him, and he found himself contemplating his companionship with no little pleasure.

"Skulp me! but what in blazes makes him snore so!" exclaimed Waufy, looking across the room, in the darkness, toward the point where he knew the man was lying. "Ex he keeps on that way, he'll have the door off the hinges. U beats all creation!"

Suddenly the racket ceased, and a movement was heard as though the sleeper was turning in bed.

"I guess he had his head fast in the bed-post," muttered the trapper. "Now he'll rest easier. Hello!"

At that instant he heard the feet of Jabez upon the floor; then he moved around the room, fumbled at his pockets, and scraped a match upon the wall.

"What's the matter?" asked Waufy; but there was no reply, and looking at the man, he saw that a spell of somnambulism was upon him, and he was unconscious of what he was doing. The trapper watched him with no little interest. Going back to his own bed, he unfastened the cord, tied a loop at one end, and stepping to the other end of the room, swung it over his shoulder, and hurled it with such precision, that before Waufy knew it, it caught one of his arms, and was instantly jerked tight.

"By ginger! I've caught the white buffalo!" exclaimed the delighted somnambulist, pulling with such power, that the burly hunter was dragged out upon the floor, sprawling full length.

"Thunderation! I should think you had!" muttered Waufy, amused in spite of his mishap. "You know how to throw the lasso, that's sartin!"

At this juncture, just as the hunter caught his knife, and cut the cord, Jabez Spikes, singularly enough, awoke. Of course he was considerably amazed when he discovered what he had done, and he was somewhat chagrined at the figure he cut.

"If you can throw the lasso that way when you are asleep, you orter know something about it when you're awake," said Waufy.

"Never tried it before in my life."

"You'll l'arn, but s'pose you stop practicing fur to-night."

Jabez took up his quarters with Waufy, and soon after both sunk into a refreshing sleep, which was undisturbed by any more troublous dreams, and neither awoke until broad daylight.

CHAPTER III

THE FATE OF THE ESCORT

THE morning dawned clear, bright and beautiful. The storm had cleared away during the night, and the sun was shining in an unclouded sky. The air was crisp, although not severe, and it was just the weather for a party that contemplated any lengthy journey.

"By ginger! this is what I denominate grandly magnificent!" exclaimed Jabez Spikes, after looking out upon the scene for a few moments. "Mr. Waufy—"

"See yer, now," growled the trapper, "s'pose you leave off that handle. Don't mister me, but jist call me by my right name."

"Well, then, Waufy, how soon will we start on our hunt for the white buffalo?"

"We! I don't start at all."

"You needn't feel bad; I intended to make you a half-partner all the while."

"No, you don't; I'm goin' up the Yallerstone to hunt beavers and otters and sich like; not any white buffler for me."

"But you are going where that natural phenomenon exists?" demanded Jabez, in considerable consternation.

"Sartinly, I'm goin' whar that critter was seen, ef that's what you mean, and I'll help you cotch him ef the thing can be done—but then it's fur *you*, and not fur me."

"All right," responded Jabez, as they made their way down stairs

At the breakfast-table, Lieutenant Putnam was encountered, and quite a pleasant conversation ensued. Waufy seemed quite communicative, and Spikes was in the best of spirits. When they had finished, the young officer said:

"I understand you start to-day for the head-waters of the Yellowstone."

"That's the idee."

"The escort which Colonel McHavens promised should be

here several days ago, has not yet appeared, and I am almost certain that something has happened to them. I find, from what you have told me, that you are going very nearly in the same direction that I wish to follow—"

"Where is Colonel McHavens?"

"He is encamped at the junction of the Black and Thunder rivers, about—"

"That's enough," interrupted the trapper. "I've been there often 'nough to know *that* place. It's 'bout twenty miles west of the trail; but, if you'll go 'long with us, we'll take you right to the spot."

The lieutenant bowed and expressed his thanks. He hardly expected such an accommodating spirit upon the part of the trapper, and could he have felt certain that no accident had happened to the escort, he would have been in as good spirits as they.

The forenoon wore away, and the weather settled into a pleasant, mild autumn day. At noon the three men ate their dinner together, and then, each mounting his horse, with Waufy's extra trotting behind like a dog, they rode down into the river that ran in front of the village, carefully forded it, and reaching the opposite side, struck off toward the west.

From this moment, it may be said that their real journey began. The time was quite a number of years ago, before Western Iowa and Missouri were so thickly populated on their western border, and the marauding Indians came down to the very villages and towns.

Colonel McHaven's exploring party consisted of something like forty men, all well armed and prepared for this expedition, so that it may be said, that when together, they were in no personal danger, as they were abundantly able to take care of themselves; but, they had already lost several stragglers, and they had every proof that they were under the constant surveillance of hordes of vigilant red-skins, who would have been only too glad to have scalped every member of the company.

The trio continued riding along at a leisurely gait, the clear bracing air imparting a vigor to the frame of each, that made the act of riding a most pleasurable exercise.

Jabez Spikes was very loquacious, and Waufy seemed to be

very communicative, and gave some most thrilling experiences that had been his in the years past.

The prairie was mainly of the rolling kind, interspersed here and there with patches of timber and wooded streams. Several of the latter were quite deep, but the great knowledge of Waufy led him to easy fords, without any hesitation.

Just at dusk they crossed a small stream, and concluded to encamp among the trees on the opposite side. Before doing so, and while the two were making their preparations, Waufy rode to a hill some distance away, and took an observation. Nothing of "sign" was perceptible, and he returned with the permission for them to kindle a fire.

"Build it down as close to the stream as you kin," said the trapper, as he came back, "for some of them varmints may be prowlin' 'round."

They had seen an abundance of game during the day, but had not taken the trouble to bring any of it down, as they had brought quite a substantial lunch with them, and they now gathered about the camp-fire to enjoy it.

Waufy was an inveterate smoker, but the others did not indulge in the use of nicotine, and they whiled the hours away in converse. When it had grown quite late, they turned in for the night, and all three slept without disturbance until morning.

The second day on the prairie was as clear and pleasant as the preceding one. The ground was compact and hard, and the animals continued on a swinging gallop until noon, when Waufy, who was in the midst of one of his "yarns," suddenly exclaimed:

"Skulp me! but thar's sign, sure."

"Where?" the others simultaneously asked, as they reined up their horses.

He pointed straight ahead, over the level prairie, to where the plain and horizon seemed to join. At first nothing could be seen, but after a close scrutiny they were enabled to detect several dark, flickering points, which they had no doubt were the "signs" detected by the trapper.

"You have a most wonderful eyesight," remarked the lieutenant, "to be able to identify humar beings at such a distance."

"You could do as well after a little practice," replied Waufy.

"Are they afoot?"

"No; they're all on hosses, ridin' on a walk."

"Going the same way with us?"

"No; they're crossin' our path, and ef we stand still, they'll be out of sight afore long."

"By ginger!" exclaimed Spikes, still gazing in the direction of the Indians, "but it takes a good eyesight to tell what particular part of animated creation those creatures belong to. I should say, now, that they were ducks engaged in turning summersets on the prairie."

They remained stationary for a few minutes, talking and conversing, when it turned out as Waufy had predicted. The Indians had vanished so completely, that not the first indication of them could be detected, and the journey was resumed.

An hour or so later, a solitary buffalo was discernible at a distance, and the party at once gave chase. He was pretty well exhausted from a long run, but it was quite a difficult matter to overtake him. Spikes and Lieutenant Putnam blazed away at him several times, with no perceptible effect, until a well-aimed shot from the hunter caused the huge beast to tumble forward, and after a few furious struggles to die.

"That there now, is what they denominate a buffalo," remarked Jabez, as he dismounted and wonderingly contemplated the large creature.

"Ef he ain't that, I'd like to know what in thunder he is," replied Waufy, as he drew his knife, and began skinning it.

"And a white buffalo is just the same as that, only he ain't brown."

"That's just the distinction, I suppose," laughed the lieutenant, "and that's the all-important one, too, in your case."

"I don't see why there shouldn't be white buffaloes as well as white horses," continued the Yankee, as though he were communing with himself.

All this time, Waufy was busy with his knife. He had cut out several tender and delicious steaks, which were intended to last them for several days to come. The animal

was found to be in much better condition than expected, and a most luscious and enjoyable meal was partaken of by all.

It was early in the afternoon, when they mounted their horses, and struck off toward the north-west. The country was found to be quite broken, in some places rising in ridges and high hills, while broad belts of timber were often encountered, although the streams were not so numerous.

They were galloping along in this manner, when Waufy, who was some distance ahead, rode up quite an elevation. Lieutenant Putnam chancing to be looking at him, saw him suddenly pause, with an exclamation of wonder or rage.

"What is it?" asked the officer, a vague fear thrilling him, as he hurried after him.

"The devils have been thar."

"The Indians?"

"Yes; come on, you'll see!"

They *did* see a sight that froze their blood. In a sort of hollow lay three horses, stretched out broadside—all dead; and, here, there and between them, were stretched the forms of what had once been men and soldiers.

They had fought bravely and to the last; but they had been ridden down and overwhelmed by the merciless redskins, who had scalped, tomahawked, and mangled their bodies, committing the most inconceivable outrages upon them.

Their clothes had been stripped from their bodies, and, as they lay in such frightful and distorted postures, the sight was one that held the three men speechless for several moments.

The trapper was the first to speak. Turning to Lieutenant Putnam, he asked:

"Have you ever see'd 'em before?"

"Yes; they are what is left of the escort Colonel McHavens sent to meet me."

"Are you sure of that?" asked the trapper.

"I know every one of them better than I do you," solemnly replied the young officer, as he wiped a tear from his eye.

"By ginger! I think we had better git out of this," remarked Jabez, who was fairly terrified at the sight, and who looked up and around, as though he expected the appearance of a horde of howling demons every minute.

"I told you the varmints war all about yer," responded the trapper, who had seen the work of the red-skins too frequently, to be permanently affected by the shocking sight. "I've had to sarcumvent 'em fur the last twenty years past."

"That there is what I denominate awful," added Jabez, who was pale and qualmish at the sickening sight. "Let's go away from here."

"Is there no means of giving these poor fellows a decent burial?" inquired Lieutenant Putnam. "It's too bad to leave them in this frightful condition."

Waufy shook his head:

"I'd help you at such a piece of work, but we can't do it. There ain't no use of puttin' them fellers under ground, without we put eight feet of airth above 'em, for the wolves and coyotes would scratch 'em out quick as a wink. We haven't got nothing but our knives to dig with, and it would take us a week to do any work that would amonnt to any thing with 'em."

"Were these men married?" inquired Jabez of the lieutenant.

"Thank God! they were not; but they had brothers, sisters and friends, whose hearts will be broken when they learn this. Perhaps there are some mementoes left near the bodies, that I may secure," said the young officer, as he braced his nerves to make a nearer approach to the bodies.

Waufy assisted him in the search, and despite its dreadful character, they made it thorough; but there was not the least vestige of any thing like a memento. The infernal red-skins had robbed them of every thing. So Lieutenant Putnam stooped down, and with his knife, tenderly severed a lock of hair from the temple of each victim, which he carefully placed away about his person, with the intention of sending them to their friends upon his return to the United States.

This was all that could be done, and they walked away from the distressing scene.

"How long ago did this happen?" asked Putnam of the trapper.

"Three or four days," he replied.

"Were they surprised by the Indians?"

"Wal, pretty much so; they made a short run of it, shoot-

ing thar pistols and guns, till the varmints got so close, that they backed up ag'inst thar hosses and blazed away; but what's the use?" was the impatient exclamation of Waufy, as he wheeled about, and walked indignantly away. "That's the way the blasted varmints allers manage sich things. Ef you have any thing like a fair show, thar's no danger of thar disturbin' you; but let 'em have a chance, and then look out."

The sight of the bodies had a depressing effect upon the men, and they rode for a long distance, without exchanging more than a few words. Waufy did not forget his usual caution, and he kept a keen look-out for "sign." Three separate times, he changed the course they were following, so as to avoid parties of Indians. They were at no great distance from the States, but they were in a country exposed to constant peril. The fate that overtook the doomed escort was no exceptional one. Single men and small parties of travelers, were the especial objects of these marauding Bedouins, and a single misstep was likely to be followed with fatal consequences.

The tragedy which our friends had witnessed was only the repetition of what had happened a thousand times before, and we all know that the same thing, often in a greater degree, as in the massacre of Fort Phil Kearney, has happened hundreds of times since. The high-spirited Caucasian and the sullen American "strike fire," when they encounter, and sad to say, the indications are that this desperate, unrelenting warfare must go on, until the doomed American disappears from the stage of action, and the Caucasian is left undisputed lord of the soil.

CHAPTER IV.

THE CAMP-FIRE.

THE afternoon of a cool, blustering day was drawing to a close, when our three friends, with their four horses at a moderate walk, drew near a high ridge, that interposed itself directly across their path, and over which, as a matter of course it was necessary to make their way.

"From the top of that ridge," said Waufy, "you can see whar the Black and Thunder rivers comes together."

"And there we shall see the encampment of Colonel McHavens and his party," said Lieutenant Putnam, with something like his old animation of manner, which immediately vanished as he added:

"It will be sad news that I bring them."

They struck their horses into a gallop, and speedily ascended the ridge. The top was covered with a species of scrubby cedar, more abundant further north, but occasionally met with in this latitude. The view, however, was a very fine one, and looking about a quarter of a mile ahead, they saw where the two streams mentioned united, but an expression of amazement escaped the officer, when he discerned nothing of the tents of the party that he expected were there awaiting his return.

"That is singular," said he. "What can it mean?"

"Maybe they have been killed; every one of them!" fairly gasped Jabez.

"No, they haven't; they were too large a party for that."

"They've changed thar camp; we'll soon see," said Waufy, as he gave his horse free rein, and went galloping down the ridge toward the point which they had been scrutinizing.

It was but a short ride, and before they reached the spot, it was easy to see that the trapper had rightly conjectured the cause of the disappearance of the party.

There were the unmistakable signs of a camp having recently been there, and Waufy said they had been gone about two days.

Near the center of the ground, a small stake was driven, with the top split, and containing a folded piece of paper directed to Lieutenant Willard Putnam. This was speedily opened by that personage, who read:

"I have received information this morning from some friendly Indians who are old acquaintances of our guide, which leads me to break camp at once and start toward the head-waters of the Thunder river. You will please follow without delay, and should you not overtake us in the course of a week, you will find us there. My guide informs me that there is little to be apprehended from Indians, if due vigilance be used, so that we

shall have little uneasiness for your safety if a fortnight shall elapse before we see you again.

"ACHILLE MCHAVENS, COL."

Lieutenant Putnam read the letter aloud, while Wanfy attentively listened.

"So they're goin' toward the head-waters of the Thunder, eh? Wal, it'll take 'em a good week to reach thar, and they haven't took the best route, either."

"Why not?"

"They're going to keep straight up the river, and its head-waters ain't more nor a day's ride from the very spot that we're aimin' fur on the Yallerstone."

"Is that so?" exclaimed the lieutenant, delighted at the announcement; "then, instead of following in their trail, I will keep you company."

"In course; but what in thunder is Colonel Mickey Havens driving at? Who is he? What's he doin' out here? What's he after? Who sent him?"

The lieutenant explained:

"We are what is termed an exploring party, although we are not directly such, as we are going over a territory which is pretty well known to many."

"Are you sent out by our glorious government?" inquired Jabez Spikes.

"Not at all; a party of private capitalists in Washington have fitted out the company and placed it under the command of Colonel McHavens, an old army officer, who has been stationed for many years on the frontier, and is now on a six-months' furlough for the purpose of attending to this duty. There are several others, besides myself, who are also on leave of absence, so that we are pretty well provided, and consider that, with an experienced guide, we are able to take care of ourselves."

"But what are you sent out thar fur?" persisted Wanfy, who seemed quite interested in the narrative.

This was the question which Lieutenant Putnam dreaded, and which he was not willing to answer directly. The truth was that Colonel McHavens had been sent out by a number of wealthy and enterprising men to see what the prospects were for organizing a gigantic and lucrative fur-trade through

the great North-west. Knowing the immense profits of the American and Hudson Bay Fur Companies, they believed there was an inviting opening for them, and they were willing to spend a little fortune to ascertain the truth.

There would naturally be some prejudice against this interference by the men whose business would be the most directly affected thereby, and Putnam, therefore, was anxious to avoid raising any coldness between himself and the trapper, for whom he had formed quite a friendship. He therefore made the non-committal reply:

"You know that but a very small portion of the country west of the Mississippi is well known and understood in the East. Lewis and Clarke have done something to enlighten them, and Fremont is at it now; but none of these men have gone anywhere near the country that we have determined to visit."

"Oh! that's it, eh?" returned the trapper, thoroughly satisfied. "All I've got to say is that them as pay fur it, are blamed fools."

"Why so?" laughed Putnam.

"I s'pect it takes a powerful heap of money to pay you folks, when they might l'arn just as much by axing some of us that have spent nearly all our lives thar."

"They might learn a great deal from you, but not *all* that they wish to know."

"Who's thar guide?"

"Badger is his name."

"Old Tom Badger?"

"I believe that is his full name. Do you know him?"

"Know him? I rather guess I do. Him and me used to hunt b'ars, when we war boys, in old Tennessee, and we begun our trappin' business together over twenty years ago. I rather think we orter be acquainted by this time."

"Is he qualified to act as guide to this expedition?"

"That's just what he is," was the emphatic response of the trapper; "thar ain't a man west of the Mississippi that is ahead of him, onless it's Kit Carson. As long as you foller ~~his~~ advice, there won't be much trouble. Howsumdever, we must be gittin' over the ground faster nor this."

The trio were well into the Indian country, and they kept

up a swinging gallop for hours at a time. As we have already intimated, they were mounted upon excellent horses, and Jabez Spikes found himself as good a rider as his companions.

When the sadness occasioned by the sight of the mangled escort had gradually worn away, he joined in the conversation with as much *vim* as any of them, but he could talk of very little except the *white buffalo*. It was that which had brought him into this dangerous country, and, if such a thing were within the range of human possibility, he was determined to take it back with him.

Visions of the fame and fortune that would follow filled his mind, and he pictured himself riding into his own village, perched on a high, narrow, box-like wagon, that should contain the phenomenon, while the prancing horses, as he lay back and pulled at the reins and cracked his whip, and the blazing posters announcing the coming of "Professor Spikes"—ah! now wouldn't that be a triumph for him? Wouldn't his old friends gnash their teeth with envy? Wouldn't the old ladies raise their hands in admiration? and wouldn't the young ladies (especially *one* who had slighted his ardent advances) sigh for such an unattainable prize as he would prove himself to be?

The tour of no conqueror through his own country, as he returned from his victories, could equal the grandeur of what his march was to be.

"Yes, sir; that there phenomenon must go back with me," he soliloquized, as he thought of all this, "he is destined to that fate, and *I'm* that fate."

When the sun declined in the horizon, they were in the center of a broad stretch of level prairie, without wood or stream of any kind; but far ahead they could discover the outlines of timber, through which, Waufy assured them, quite a brook of water ran. They aimed for this, for the hunter dislikes a camp in the open plain, where he can throw no screen over his movements, and where the necessity, water, is unattainable.

Their horses were pretty well jaded, for they had gone over a long stretch of country; but they seemed to comprehend what was the object of this hurry, and they pricked up their

ears and galloped along, as though they scented water in the air

It was fully night when they drew rein in the grove and dismounted, scarcely less tired than their wearied horses ; but there was an abundance of rich, juicy grass, and cool, sparkling water ; so, after they had governed the animals somewhat, as they slaked their thirst, they gave them the free run of the grove, while a fire was kindled in the densest part, and the trapper superintended the preparation of their evening meal, made from the buffalo-meat still in their possession.

They chatted a long while around the camp-fire, during which Waufy stated that they had been very fortunate, in that the afternoon had passed without detecting any sign of an Indian.

"That ain't sayin' there ain't no varmints in the country," he hastened to add ; "but it looks powerful strong as though they wa'n't close enough to scare anybody."

As it was a physical impossibility that Waufy should act the part of sentinel for every succeeding night, he concluded to let one of his companions take that duty during the present evening, especially as he had no apprehension of danger.

When he stated his wishes, both instantly volunteered, but he chose Spikes, as the one who most needed initiation into the duties.

"You see you've never done any thing of the kind," he said, by way of apology, "and therefore you'd better begin first."

"You're tremendously mistaken," replied Jabez ; "this won't be the first night I've set up and kept watch."

"Ah !" replied the lieutenant, who thought there was something worth hearing behind this, "you've had some experience in this business ?"

"*I have,*" was the emphatic response. "I reckon I've set up for over forty nights with Mary Ann Stiggins, one of our neighbor's daughters."

"The entire night ?"

"Yes, sir ; from seven o'clock in the evening till six o'clock next morning."

"That's courting with a vengeance," laughed Putnam. "I presume you are engaged to be married to this young lady."

"No, by ginger !" was the doleful response.

"How is that?"

Spikes heaved a great sigh, as though reluctant to relate this dismal episode in his life. Finally, he added:

"I suppose I may as well relate it, but you must remember that it is confidential between us, and you musn't ever tell anybody. I got along very well with Mary Ann for some time. Her folks were suited and so were mine, and so were we--at least I was, and she seemed to be, till old Speewinks, who kept the tavern, hired a new bar-tender. He had black curly hair, that was frizzled all over his head, and covered with castor-oil and cologne till you could smell it across the street. He had a black mustache, too, that was as shiny, and curled up at the ends. He wore a ruffled shirt-front with a breast-pin as big as a pan-cake, and a yellow watch-chain that would have done for a yoke of oxen to haul wood with. Then his pants were so tight that he couldn't sit down without sticking his legs out straight.

"He was a stunner, and half the girls in the village were crazy over him, but I wouldn't have cared if he hadn't got after Mary Ann. One Sunday night I was waiting outside the church to take her arm, as usual, when my heart give a big jump, as I saw her and the bar-tender coming out arm-in-arm; he was gabbing away, with his head leaned over toward her, and she was grinning and listening, as though she was pleased to death.

"Ginger! wasn't I mad! I jist stepped up, and crooking my elbow, said:

"'Come, Mary Ann, let's hurry home.' Well, sir, she didn't look at me, only she laughed, and the other girls coming out, snickered; and the two walked right on, and left me there alone.

"I walked home alone that night, and made up my mind that things looked squally. I wasn't ready to give Mary Ann up, fur she was a fine girl, and I didn't know how to head off that bar-tender. I knew I was better looking than he, so I concluded it must be his appearance that did the business; so I heated the poker and frizzled my hair that night, and put tallow and lavender on, and got father's pantaloons on after he went to bed. Father was twice as thin as me, and when I pulled on his trowsers, they were so tight that I couldn't

walk until I had stepped round very carefully for awhile ; but I thought they would do, and felt quite proud of them, for they were just as tight as the bar-tender's.

" Then I thought, to help matters along, I would step into Speewinks', get to chatting with the bar-tender, and try and set him against Mary Ann. He received me very politely, and listened very attentively when I told him I had something important to tell. I said more than I ought to, but I was considerably worked up. I told him Mary Ann had made all kinds of fun of him ; when she first saw him, said she wouldn't be seen with him, and was only trifling with him ; that she and I were engaged to be married, and I advised him as a friend, that if he wished to save himself from ridicule, he had better withdraw altogether."

" What did he say to that ?" asked the lieutenant, as Spikes paused for several moments, as though in doubt whether to proceed or not.

" He didn't say any thing at all ; he just listened and listened, and when I got through, asked me if I wouldn't take a drink. Now I am a strictly temperance man, but I thought he felt so bad I wouldn't make him feel worse by refusing, so I swallowed half a tumbler of something that tasted like liquid fire.

" When I started to go, he urged me to take another drink, and I was fool enough to do it. He didn't say any thing, but I noticed a queer grin upon his face, as I started out the door ; but I didn't think any thing of that till the next morning, when I thought the whole thing over.

" When I got outside, I found the whisky cocktails, as he called them, had gotten into my head, and I began to feel very queer. I started to go off the porch of the tavern, and I stepped *up* instead of stepping down, and snapped my head back so that I thought I'd cracked my neck off. This hat—this very one, by ginger, that I've got on now—rolled off in the mud, and when I stooped down to pick it up, I couldn't get hold of it, so I thought I would stoop down again, aim my head straight, and then make a dive, so as to jam my head in, and then, no matter in what way I picked myself up, I would have the hat secure.

" So I took aim, and made a dive forward, just like a bat

frog when he plumps into the brook; but I missed the hat, struck my head on the other side of it, and turned a summer-set over on my back before I could stop; but I grabbed the hat, and when I got up I had it sure.

"Well, I started down the road, and I never knew how I got to old Stiggins'. I don't believe there was a bother along the road that I didn't tumble over, and sometimes I got to going forward so fast, the only way to stop was to fetch up against the fence, and that gave me such a lunge in the stomach that it nearly killed me.

"I had an idea that father's pants were badly torn in more than one place, but, when I turned round to see, I couldn't see, and kept on turning round, till I fell down again, just as you have seen a pup do, when he was after a fly that had lit on his tail.

"It was something over an hour after, when I pitched into Stiggins' gate, and rapped the big knocker on the door. While I was waiting, I saw such a light in the parlor, and heard such a laughing and fiddling, that I knew there was a party there. I ought to have gone home, but it only fired me up to think that Mary Ann should do such a thing and not ask me.

"So, when their Irish girl opened the door, I just pitched in, without saying a word, and as mad as '*Hello, Pete, before day!*' The fiddle was going, and they were all dancing round the room; and by ginger! the first couple I identified was that bar-tender, with his arm round Mary Ann Stiggins' waist, as they whirled by me.

The sight fried me, and balancing myself against the side of the door, till they came by again, I made a dive for them, intending to come between them, just like an ax when it splits the wood; but when I reached them they were not there, and I rolled over on the floor.

"*'Ain't he a brute!' 'He ought to be ashamed!' 'Why don't he get his pants mended!' 'Put him out!'* were some of the exclamations I heard around me, and by that time I began to realize that I had made a mistake, and that that call upon Mary Ann, *considered as a call*, was a failure.

"*'Ladies (hic) and gemm'l'm,'* I stuttered, bracing myself against the mantlepiece, so as to keep my pantaloons as much

as possible out of sight, 'this ain't me (hic), this ain't Jabez Spikes—it's that feller's' (here I pointed at the grinning bartender); 'he done it—he give me a cocktail (hic), and it's my 'liberate 'pinion he *put liquor in it!*'

"Then they began to scream and laugh again, and somebody led me to the door, and helped me out in the road again. The last thing I heard, as I pitched down the road, was, that rascally bar-tender calling out, '*Cock-tail!*'"

"Well, by ginger, next morning, every man and boy in the village yelled '*Cock-tail!*' at me, when I showed myself. I thought it would blow over after awhile, but it kept getting worse and worse, until I got mad and left, and here I am.

"Now," added Jabez, a moment later, as he heaved a great sigh, "I want to be revenged on Mary Ann Stiggins and that bar-tender, and the best way I can do is to catch that great phenomenon, the *white buffalo*, and take him back hum, with me as proprietor. Ain't it natural that I should feel so?"

All agreed that such a feeling was perfectly natural.

CHAPTER V.

ON GUARD.

AFTER the recital of Jabez Spikes' story, the trapper and lieutenant turned in for the night. Wrapping their blankets around them, they laid down with their feet to the fire, leaving the Yankee to act his part as sentinel.

Filled with the importance of his situation, Jabez took his rifle in hand and walked out on the edge of the wood, in which they had encamped. There was a faint moon in the sky, and an impressive stillness rested upon every thing. Nothing but the soft wash of the brook at his feet, and the soft sighing of the night-wind through the tree-tops, caught his ear.

"The^{1c} American Indian roams everywhere," reflected the sentinel; "who knows but what some of them are lurking

near me this minute? Gíngération! no danger of *my* going to sleep!"

For fully two hours Jabez paced back and forth through the wood, occasionally pausing and listening, but failing to detect any thing suspicious.

"I don't believe any of the 'varmints,' as Waufy calls them, are near us," he soliloquized, as he paused again in the wood. "The fire has all gone out, and they can't see any thing, so I will sit down and rest awhile."

He had no purpose of sleeping, but, as may be supposed, he had scarcely seated himself five minutes, when his eyes closed and he passed off into the land of dreams.

He slept a considerable time, when, from some unaccountable cause he awoke.

"Ginger!" he muttered, as he rubbed his eyes, "I have been asleep, as sure as preaching! but only for a few minutes."

He rubbed the grit out of his eyes, yawned and muttered:

"It ain't a safe thing to sit down to rest when you are acting, for you are pretty certain—"

A cold chill crept over him as he distinctly heard a rustling among the trees but a few yards in front of him. Thoughts of Indians, tomahawks and tortures flashed through his mind, and he sat like one paralyzed for a few moments.

"Who's there?" he finally ventured, in a half-whisper, but there was no response.

"It's Waufy or the lieutenant," he concluded, with a grin; "they are trying to scare me, but they can't do it."

Rising stealthily to his feet, he made his way to where the camp-fire had smoldered almost to ashes. Stirring these up, so that they gave out a few flashes of light, he saw, with a terror it would be difficult to depict, the two forms of his friends, wrapped up in their blankets and sleeping soundly.

"Ginger! what does it mean?" he fairly gasped, as he shrunk back into the shadows again; "there's somebody else near us, síre."

He stood a moment, hesitating whether he should wake his companions or not, but he was fearful of incurring their ridicule, and he concluded to make sure that danger threatened before disturbing them.

Just then he observed that he was without his hat, and he hurried back to the tree to recover it, but it was gone!

There could be no mistaking the spot where he had just rested; but there was no hat there; and, while he was in a maze of wonderment as to that, he was astounded at discovering that his gun and pistol had also vanished!

"Gingeration!" he fairly gasped, as the cold sweat stole over him. "Somebody stole them away from me when I was asleep, and who could it be?"

Ay! that was the question, indeed. Certain it was that it was neither Lieutenant Putnam nor Waufy the trapper, for they were sound asleep, and doubtless had not opened their eyes since lying down in slumber.

"Some Indians have been here," concluded Jabez, "and if that is so, why didn't they kill me? I wonder if I am scalped!"

He clapped his hand upon his head, and was in grave doubt for an instant whether that operation had not been so neatly performed upon him that the pain had not yet begun.

But the yellow hair was still there in all its luxuriance, and he had the comforting assurance that his scalp was unharmed.

Again a slight rustling caught his ear, and Jabez stealthily made his way through the wood, to the edge of the prairie.

Could he believe his eyes? In the dim moonlight, he distinctly saw the figure of a man running away at full speed.

"Ginger!" he muttered, "what a narrow escape I have had; but what will *they* say, when they awake in the morning and find it out?"

Only a few minutes elapsed, when he saw from the increasing light in the east, that morning was at hand, proof that he had slept a much longer time than he had imagined hitherto.

Jabez racked his brains to see whether he could get up any plausible theory to account for his dismal mishap; but he could originate nothing, and he wisely concluded to tell the whole truth.

Tell the truth he did, without any prevarication, and, as may be supposed, his story created no little amazement. Lieutenant Putnam was not only astonished but greatly perplexed

to account for the conduct of the enemy who had stolen in upon them and so cleverly outwitted the sentinel.

The four horses were found undisturbed, which gave the incident a still more unaccountable look.

"I can't understand it," remarked the officer, as they partook of the morning meal. "Why a vindictive Indian should spare a white man's life—"

Waufy nudged the lieutenant, and remarked in a voice that reached no ears but his for whom they were intended :

"It wasn't a red-skin at all."

Putnam turned upon him, the picture of perplexity.

"Who then?"

"Some white hunter or trapper ; but don't let him know it."

"Do you mean it was a joke?"

"Sartinly ; we'll find out what it all means, afore we go very far to-day."

It was early in the forenoon when the three rode out from the grove, Jabez Spikes wearing his cotton handkerchief bound about his head. They headed north-east, and had gone scarcely a half-mile, when, in passing over a small elevation, they encountered two hunters just preparing to start.

The parties stared at each other a moment, and then one called out.

"Hullo, Waufy !"

"Hullo, Baldy !"

And Waufy rode up and shook both heartily by the hand, while Putnam and Jabez remained in the background, looking on and listening.

The trappers chatted and conversed in their characteristic manner, during which it transpired that "Baldy," and his companion were bound westward to Fort Laramie, where they had agreed to meet a caravan and carry it to Oregon.

Then they approached closer, and conversed in such low tones that their sentences could not be understood. When they had finished, Baldy rode up to Jabez, and, handing him his gun, pistol, and stove-pipe, said :

"I give 'em back to you, stranger ; with the advice that the next time you undertake to keep watch in an Injin kentry, it ain't a good plan to git so sound asleep that we kin hear you snore half a mile away."

And before the dumbfounded Yankee could make any reply, the two trappers struck their horses into a gallop and speedily disappeared.

"Ginger! if it ain't the identical gun and revolver!" exclaimed Jabez, as he turned the weapons over in his hand, "and the same old hat," he added, as he pulled it down upon his head; "now that is what I call extremely fortunate—extremely fortunate."

And then Waufy explained to them how the joke had been perpetrated.

Baldy and his comrade had caught the star-like glimmer of the camp-fire, shortly after dark, and stole forward to learn whether they had Indians or white men for neighbors. Making his way into the grove, he listened to Jabez Spikes' story, and suspecting his verbiage determined to play his joke upon him:

He patiently waited until the sentinel sat down and went to sleep in the manner described, when he had no little difficulty in taking the articles mentioned from him. It was his intention to return them on the morrow, and he would have ridged into Waufy's camp with them had not their acquaintance started sooner than they anticipated and saved them that trouble.

"You oughter made the acquaintance of Baldy," added Waufy.

"Ginger! I rather think I did," laughed Jabez.

"*He seen the buffler!*"

"When—how long ago?" demanded the excited Yankee.

"Yesterday."

"Where was it?"

"Right ahead—toward where we be going."

"Now you don't say so!" added the delighted Jabez; "he was alive and well?"

"Never in better health."

"They didn't kill him?"

"No; he is rather too old, and they liked something young and tender a good deal better."

"Good! then we'll be sure to see him."

"It begins to look that way."

"And catch him too. Ginger! won't it be a magnificent

victory for me? Won't I sail into the village on top of my big wagon painted red, with the great phenomenon of the Far West? Won't Mary Ann Stiggins feel bad, and won't that bar-tender haul in his horns a little—

"There's one thing I forgot to tell you," interrupted Waufy.

"What's that?"

"The buffler that Baldy and Jim seen wasn't *white*, but a *dark color*."

CHAPTER VI.

THE YELLOWSTONE STEAMER.

THROUGH storm and sunshine, cold and heat, danger and safety, our three friends at length struck the great Yellowstone river far up in the North-west, in the center of what is still a wild and dangerous country.

It was on the afternoon of a clear autumn day, that the travelers reined up their horses on the margin of the broad, turbid stream, and looked across to where the ~~rain~~ woods and prairies were to be seen on the opposite side.

"The time will come when that will be traversed by shipping and steamers ~~as the~~ Hudson is to-day," remarked Lieutenant Putnam.

"Yas; and if I ain't powerfully mistook, there's a steamer this minute," returned the trapper, pointing down-stream.

"Impossible," exclaimed his companions, simultaneously.

But, following the direction of his finger, they saw a thin, almost horizontal line of smoke dissipating into clear air at one end, while it kept growing and advancing at the other. It being below a curve in the river, had the appearance of being directly over the land instead of on the water, a delusion all understood.

"I didn't know that any steamers had ever ascended thus far," remarked the lieutenant, after they had contemplated it several minutes.

"Yas, there is; there's a little *purpellyer* (propeller) I

"b'leve you call 'em, that's been up the Yallerstone several times."

"How far?"

"Hundreds of miles above here, and if I ain't powerful mistook that's the same critter."

"Ginger! look!" exclaimed Spikes.

At this moment the steamer rounded the bend below, and came in full sight. It could be seen that it was quite small, but it was one evidently built for river navigation, for it came through the foaming water with great speed.

It was a curious scene, this little puffing boat, making its way through this vast solitude, the pioneer of the fleets that were to follow it. The three sat on their horses, watching it with no little interest, when suddenly Lieutenant Putnam asked:

"How far up do you think that boat is going?"

"Two, three hundred miles at least."

"That will be so much on our way; let's go aboard and ride."

Jabez Spikes enthusiastically seconded the proposal, but the trapper held back. He didn't think the four horses would be acceptable on the boat, although there undoubtedly was room for them; but the truth was, as Lieutenant Putnam saw, the old hunter was suspicious of the steamboat, and didn't like the idea of trusting his person upon it. Still he hoped to overcome his dislike.

The steamer kept near the center of the stream, and when they judged that they could be seen, Spikes waved his handkerchief on the end of his ramrod. The signal attracted immediate notice, but those on board seemed somewhat reluctant to run in to shore in this dangerous country, until assured of the character of the party.

They slackened steam, and started toward shore, to gain a closer view of the hailing-party. This seemed satisfactory, and they came on in until they almost touched land. The water was quite deep, and there was no difficulty in approaching close enough, and a rope was thrown out, and the craft secured, as if it were approaching the docks in St. Louis.

On board the little side-wheel were Captain Bennett, an old river captain, and three hands. The captain had a slight

acquaintance with Waufy, and invited him and his party to come on board, and go up-stream with them.

"How far are you going?" inquired Lieutenant Putnam.

"Clear up," was both the definite and indefinite reply.

"May I inquire your purpose?"

"We are on our way to take supplies to Colonel McHavens and his men, who are to meet us at the head-waters of the Yellowstone."

"What sort of supplies are you carrying?"

"Provisions and ammunition."

The young officer laughed.

I had no idea that they were in want of any thing. When I left them they were abundantly supplied with ammunition, and the man that can't secure enough game in this country to live ought to die."

They can get enough, such as it is, I suppose," returned Captain Bennett; "but we have salt provisions, spirits, tobacco, and the like, which I never heard tell were lying round loose in this country; but do you belong to that party?"

"Yes; I am lieutenant, and am on my return to my company."

"Then you will join us and go aboard."

"Thank you, I will."

"Hain't you got any one fur guide?" asked Waufy

"We had old Bill Zigler. You see, we didn't leave St. Louis till a good while after Colonel McHavens and his party had gone; so he didn't know we were coming. So Bill come up the river part way with us, and then started across the country, so as to tell the colonel where we would meet; and that's why he ain't with us now."

Quite a scene now ensued. Lieutenant Putnam, very naturally, concluded to make the rest of the journey by steamer, and Jabez Spikes, who was somewhat frightened from the many proofs he had seen of the atrocious disposition of the Indians, agreed to accompany him.

"I'm after the white buffalo, you see," he remarked, by way of explanation to the trapper, "but I ain't likely to see him *between* here and there, and then I think—between you and me—the lieutenant is anxious to have me go with him."

But Waufy resisted all these importunities. He made

various pretexts, and finally gave the true one. He never liked those "infarnal locomotives on water," and he wouldn't put his foot on board if he had a thousand yelling savages at his heels.

"I'll go on for the upper Yallerstone, and I'll git there first, too, and what's more I'll have my ha'r on my head, and that's more than some of you will be able to say in a few days," replied Waufy, shaking his head and speaking with an earnestness that impressed his hearers.

As there seemed to be no probability of the horses being needed by those upon the steamer, it was arranged that Waufy should take all four with him, he agreeing that if he reached Colonel McHavens' command ahead of them he would, as a matter of course, leave the two that were not his, with the party, to await the coming of their owners.

This settled, Waufy bade them good-by, the rope was unwound from the tree around which it had been "snubbed," the whistle of the steamer gave a shriek, the large wheel at the stern lashed the water into foam, and the boat resumed its course up the Yellowstone.

Perhaps it should have been mentioned that while the interview was in progress, Lieutenant Putnam was equally surprised and pleased to observe that there was a female on board the steamer—a female, too, that was handsomely dressed, and was beautiful and attractive herself. She was seated on the upper deck, watching the men and listening to their words, but taking no part therein.

Both the lieutenant and Spikes observed her fair white teeth, as she smiled, and her dark hair, rose-tinted cheeks, and her rich but tasteful dress, as she sat there looking down upon them with an indifferent air, as though she cared not whether they came aboard or not; and we may add that it is doubtful to which of the young men her society was the greatest inducement to take passage on the boat.

The lieutenant supposed she was the daughter of Captain Bennett, and he was therefore not a little taken aback, when that officer informed him that she was the child of Colonel McHavens, the commander of the exploring party.

"What is she doing here?" was the natural query of our hero.

"She is one of your daring creatures, and a niece of mine. The colonel and I have long promised her that she should take a trip up the Yellowstone with me, and she concluded now was a good time to take it."

"Then the colonel knows nothing about it?"

"No; and the hunter we sent overland to let him know where to meet us, promised that he would keep it a secret from him. It is the wish of Adrienne to give her father a surprise, and I think she'll do it."

By and by, at the lieutenant's request, Captain Bennett introduced him to his fair passenger. She greeted him in a self-possessed, lady-like manner, and the two seated themselves within a respectful distance of each other, on the upper deck.

The education of a cadet at West Point is such as to make him at home in the presence of the gentler sex, and Lieutenant Putnam had been known as one of the handsomest and most entertaining of the young "dogs of war," while in attendance at that celebrated military school.

And yet, when he found himself *tête-à-tête* with Adrienne McHavens, and realized that he was in the presence of a lady by nature and education, he felt some natural embarrassment, and was certain that he appeared at an irrecoverable disadvantage, while she was as lively and self-possessed as though she were chatting with her own brother.

The conversation was without particular point for some time; the young officer making himself known as a subordinate under her father, naturally excited some interest upon her part, and he ventured to remark that she incurred no personal risk in penetrating so far into the Indian country, even though it was on board a swift steamer, under the guidance of a skillful captain.

"Perhaps I do," she answered, with one of her winning smiles. "At any rate, I have been reminded of it frequently enough ever since I first made the resolve; but, after all, that is the great attraction."

"So I supposed; you may have the comfort of believing 't perilous, and I trust the good fortune of proving, in the end, that it has not been so."

"Father and uncle promised me this trip long ago, and I

thought now was a favorable opportunity for the fulfillment of the promise. Mother was strongly opposed to it, but I won her consent."

"You have a brother, I believe?"

"Fortunately he is in Washington, and it was impossible for him to return in time to prevent my going, as I know he would have done, had he been at home."

"You had no lady companions to accompany you?"

"No; an old schoolmate promised, but her courage gave out, when it came time to get ready, and instead of going with me, she endeavored to persuade me to stay at home. If you had heard her plead, you would have believed that she had already made the trip, and had narrowly escaped the most unimaginable horrors."

"It will be a great surprise to Colonel McHavens."

Adrienne's clear laugh rung out over the river, and she answered:

"Yes; and he will chide me when he sees me, but then it will not be the first time."

"You do not hold his displeasure in such dread as do his soldiers."

"None would fear to grieve him more than I," she replied earnestly. "But this will not be a real grief to him. He will be so glad to see me."

"Do you propose to return by steamer, or with our party?"

"I think I will come back with him. You see it will be rather monotonous coming down the river after having ascended it, while it will be all new and strange to come back on land."

"You certainly are a daring young lady, and worthy of being the daughter of such a soldier."

Adrienne was not displeased at the compliment; indeed she accepted it, as a soldier would receive a recognition of his gallantry from a brother.

"I hope I am not foolhardy, but this is rare enjoyment to me."

"Has it not been tiresome at times, since leaving St. Louis?"

"Never," was the enthusiastic response. "I have sat here for hours, watching the ever varying scenery along the banks

breathing the pure air that comes from the woods and prairies, until I have felt that I was enjoying the finest excursion of my life."

"Have you seen any thing of the 'noble red-man'?"

"Not a great deal; I can not say that I particularly admire the 'varmints,' as the hunters call them. In their case at least, 'distance lends enchantment to the view;' a number of them displayed their horsemanship along the banks, and once or twice, when we stopped to get wood, they came down to trade with us. One of them seemed to form quite a good opinion of me, due no doubt to the fact that our acquaintance was so brief. He presented me with a handsome buffalo-robe, and invited me in ungrammatical English to become his squaw; he really looked heart-broken, when I declined his offer."

"Poor fellow; perhaps he is now pining away with a broken heart."

"I hope not; I brought along a number of books and papers to read, but I really could not spare the time. When the night was dark, I spent an hour or two in my room in that way, but only then. The utmost that I could do, was to make a few sketches of the scenery along the bank."

"When convenient to you, I should be glad to see them."

Adrienne opened the portfolio which lay upon her lap, and handed several sheets to the lieutenant.

"I had not the patience to finish them."

"These are admirable, indeed," he exclaimed, as he examined them with no little delight. They were little more than outlines, but they were drawn with the eye and hand of an artist, and our hero was honest in his admiration.

"They are not deserving of compliment," she returned. "I made them more to please father than any thing else."

"You must make some more of them."

"There is my favorite one," she added, as she handed another sheet to him. "I am very choice of that, as I took extra pains with it."

It was a capital picture of a Cheyenne warrior, with his blanket over his shoulder, while the girdle at his waist displayed enough to show his tomahawk and scalping-knife, his long rifle in hand, and with the feathers and the general make-up of an Indian brave upon the war-path.

"That is perfect," said the lieutenant, as he held it off from him. "It could not be improved."

"That is Way-geeb-wa-ka, or something very similar," she laughed. "I made two sketches of him, giving him one of them. If the delight he showed continues, there is little fear of his dying of a broken heart. I am afraid it will create trouble in his wigwam, if he frames and hangs it up there."

CHAPTER VII.

RIVALS IN LOVE.

AN! those were golden moments, as Lieutenant Putnam sat beside Adrienne McHavens, and listened to the music of her laugh and words; but, as the afternoon glided away, it became manifest that Jabez Spikes was of the opinion that his presence was indispensable to the party.

After making a circuit of the boat, examining the engine-room, and every point of interest about it, he came upon the upper deck, and walked by the laughing, chattering couple several times. They were too absorbed to pay any heed to him for some time; but he would not remain in the background. Finding that he attracted no attention, he finally paused directly in front of the two, and said:

"Good-afternoon, lieutenant."

The young officer looked up in surprise, observing a curious smile upon the face of Adrienne, as he did so, and then answered:

"How do you do, Jabez?"

"Tolerable, thank you! ahem!"

Putnam took the hint, and introduced the Yankee to Miss McHavens. He very politely raised his stove-pipe from his head, with a low bow, scraping his foot upon the deck, and then he seated himself upon the other side of the lady, so that it may be said she was sandwiched between the two gentlemen.

The eyes of Adrienne McHavens fairly sparkled, as she

looked upon the New-Englander, who, while possessing enough book education to "teach school," was extremely verdant in almost every thing else. She thought it would be more amusing than sketching to entertain him, and she began inquiring with great interest about his friends and relations he had left at home. Spikes was not a little flattered by what he deemed this decided preference, upon the part of the lady, of him over the military officer that had been endeavoring so hard to entertain her. He gave her credit for penetration enough to detect real merit, when she encountered it.

While thus occupied, Adrienne felt some one quietly drawing her portfolio from her lap. Hastily turning her head, she saw Lieutenant Putnam's hand upon it, while his face and tongue asked the question :

"May I examine the sketches?"

She nodded in the affirmative, and actually winked to him. It was a habit she had with her schoolmates, when contemplating some mischief, and she did it unconsciously to the young officer at her side, a thing she never would have dreamed of doing, had she taken the time to think.

However, it did the lieutenant an immense deal of good, and entirely dissipated the slight twinges of jealousy that he began to feel. So he busied himself in examining the sketches, all of which were interesting, and some startling from their delicate beauty and skillful execution.

The fair artist had probably given her permission for this examination, without reflecting upon what was in there. The young officer, as he turned over the different sheets, came upon a number of suspiciously shaped notes, and cards; but as a matter of course, these were not glanced at sufficiently for him to see the superscription. He felt that he had no business to know any thing regarding these, and he found all the enjoyment he could desire in admiring the sketches. He did not listen to and cared nothing for the conversation at his side.

Jabez Spikes was the picture of blissful content. His long "stove-pipe" was shoved back from his forehead, his yellowish coat buttoned to his chin, one of his long legs thrown carelessly over the other, with his fingers resting upon his knee, the palm turned outward, and the other arm reached around against the railing, so as partly to encircle the form of Adrienne

McHavens, who, leaning slightly forward, conversed with him in her most animated manner.

"I'm traveling really for my health," remarked Jabez, in the lofty manner of a millionaire referring to his stock operations. "I intended to make this tower some years ago, but it was a long—a tremendously long time before I could arrange my business, so as to permit my absence."

"I suppose you are overwhelmed with business."

"Ginger! I should think I was; I am almost drowned with it. You see, I own a line of steamboats running between Hartford and New York—"

"How many compose the line?" interrupted his listener.

"Seventeen—all magnificent first-class steamers. They have all crossed the ocean and are sea-worthy. Then I had a couple of cotton-mills in Rhode Island that had to be looked after, besides my farm at home, and the bank of which I am president, and also—"

"That will do—it really bewilders me to hear of so much business. Why did you not bring your wife along?"

"*Wife!*" fairly shouted Jabez; "did you think I am married?"

"Certainly; you are of age, are you not?"

"Oh! yes; but I could find no girl at hum that suited me. I think I'll have to hunt up a wife on the broad peraries."

As Spikes uttered this, he smiled and looked sideways in a very longing and expressive manner at Adrienne, who, while understanding the meaning of this, did not permit him to see that she observed it.

"I suppose, then, you have taken a fancy to the 'daughters of the forest?'"

"What do you mean by that? These Indian squaws?"

"Certainly."

"Thunderation!—excuse me!—gingeration, I mean; I am more particular in my tastes."

"But did you leave no one behind, who sighs for your coming?—who will be heart-broken if you remain away too long?"

"Well, yes," replied Jabez, smiling hugely, and stroking his chin, "but then, you know, I can't help *that*."

"Not if you have been circumspect in your behavior toward them."

"That is what I always endeavor—yes, endeavor—to the

utmost to be; but then, if a lady will fall in love with me, how am I to blame?—that's what I'd like to know, and how am I to prevent it, also?"

"You can hardly be expected to answer for your attractions."

"I suspect, in many cases," continued Jabez, "that it is partly or mostly my wealth that attracts these young ladies."

"Undoubtedly; you should have concealed your riches from me; then, you see, I would have nothing but simply *yourself* to admire."

"Well," said Spikes, with another of his sidelong glances and smiles, "I told *you*, because I knew you had such noble qualities of mind that *riches* could have no effect upon you."

And thus they conversed, Jabez growing more pointed in his compliments; Adrienne parrying them with the skill natural to a handsome and well-trained lady. The Yankee was certainly smitten, and he edged up so close to her that she was compelled to edge closer to Lieutenant Putnam, who did not seem in the least displeased at this state of affairs.

The afternoon wore rapidly away, and Jabez Spikes became more ardent in his expressions until there was really reason to fear that he intended to propose. Adrienne parried his approaches, until, to avert the catastrophe, she turned to the lieutenant and drew him into the conversation.

This checkmated the loving Yankee, as the interposition of a third party is pretty certain to do at any time.

By this time it was growing dark, and carefully replacing the sketches in her portfolio, the officer returned it to the fair young artist, thanking her for the pleasure she had thus been the means of giving him.

Shortly after, a bell was heard ringing below, which Adrienne explained was the signal for supper. The three descended from the upper deck, Jabez finding, when he turned to escort Miss McHavens, that the lieutenant had anticipated him.

The little steamer, upon which our friends were journeying, had been constructed purposely for the business upon which it was now engaged. While quite small, it resembled, in many respects, the ordinary river-steamers of the North. It was quite narrow, with a stern-wheel, as we have already stated.

an upper deck, surmounted by the pilot-house, where the captain or one of his men was continually standing at the wheel. This deck was inclosed by a railing, which served as a support to the seats that ran around it. Below was a small saloon, in which a table was found spread by our friends, as they descended from above. The cook was a negro, who had served in that capacity upon a Mississippi steamer, and well understood his business.

The captain joined them at the table, and they spent a half-hour very pleasantly. Lieutenant Putnam counted, with no little delight, upon spending several hours upon the deck, or in the small saloon, in converse with Adrienne. So did Spikes, none the less confidently.

Great, therefore, was the disappointment of each, when she excused herself, and withdrew to her own apartment, announcing that she would meet them at the breakfast-table in the morning.

"Ginger! I didn't expect that," exclaimed Jabez, as she vanished from view.

"No; it is quite a disappointment to both," remarked Lieutenant Putnam.

"Yes," replied the Yankee, in his lofty manner, as he recalled the interest Adrienne had manifested in him, "I am quite pleased with her, and from what you saw yourself, you will admit—yes, unhesitatingly admit—that it is *mutual*."

"It looks very much that way," returned the lieutenant; "have you relinquished all designs upon Mary Ann Stiggins?"

"Mary Ann Stiggins to thunder!" was the disgusted exclamation of Jabez; "she ain't a circumstance to *Ady*."

"Whom do you mean by *Ady*?"

"Why she; you don't suppose I call her Miss McHavens, like you? No; we are too intimate for that."

"What does she call *you*?"

"Jabe, of course."

"You are progressing quite rapidly in your acquaintance."

Jabez Spikes looked loftier than ever, as he stroked his yellow goatee, and made reply:

"I suppose, lieutenant, you have heard of such a thing as

electric affinity—I advise you to read up on that; then you will understand the case—yes, understand it thoroughly.”

Jabez was evidently thoroughly imbued with the idea that Adrienne McHavens was hopelessly in love with him; and now he concluded that, if he could only capture the *white buffalo*, and take this beautiful young lady home with him as his wife, then indeed would his triumph over Mary Ann Stiggins and the bar-tender, and all those who had ridiculed him, be perfect. *That* was now his scheme, “revised and corrected up to date.”

Lieutenant Putnam chatted with his friend some minutes longer, and then went to the upper deck and to the pilot-house, where Captain Bennett was standing at the wheel. The sky was clear, with a gibbous moon, so that both sides of the river could be dimly discovered. As the captain had been far above this point on several occasions before, and recognized the way, he kept running the entire night.

When he needed sleep, he took it in the daytime, when it was safe to intrust the helm to an assistant. As there was little for the other hands to do except to attend to the engine, they were able to relieve each other at that.

As the young officer stepped upon the upper deck, the air blew fresh and cool against his face, and, somehow or other, there came with it a feeling of oppression—something like a presentiment that some evil was impending. He had intended to hold converse with the captain, for a while, at least; but the oppressive feeling was so strong, that he turned his back upon him, and paced back and forth, where he could be alone with his own meditations.

There seemed to be an incubus weighing him down, for which he could not account. Indeed, there was every reason to feel in exuberant spirits. He had made the acquaintance of the most charming young lady he had ever met, and hope told the flattering tale that she was not displeased with him.

And he had her promise that these sunshiny hours should be repeated in the morning, and he should enjoy the bliss of her sweet presence again.

“Then why do I feel this way?” he asked himself, with a great sigh, as he paced back and forth.

He had become accustomed to the wild grandeur of the

solitude through which they were journeying, so that he could stand sentinel through the entire night without going into a poetic frenzy.

But there was a different feeling that had now come over him. He was sad, and apprehensive that some great calamity was close at hand. What its particular character was, he could not say, but the parting words of Waufy still lingered in his ears, and he wondered whether they were not the cause.

"At any rate, I am sorry *she* is on board," muttered the lieutenant; "her society is Paradise for me, but it was a sad mistake in her coming."

The young officer paced the deck a few minutes longer, when the head of Jabez Spikes slowly rose into view.

"Don't be so down in the mouth, lieutenant," he called out, as soon as he saw him; "I am sorry you take it so to heart; but, ginger! I can't help it, if she falls in love with me!"

CHAPTER VIII.

ON SHORE.

THERE is nothing like vigorous health and the golden sunshine to dissipate the gloom from our spirits. When, on the following morning, after Adrienne had partaken of her breakfast in her room, she made her appearance on the upper deck, as rosy and beautiful as the earliest spring flower, Lieutenant Putnam forgot all his gloom of the preceding night, in the joy of seeing her again.

He was certain he had never encountered so beautiful a lady as she was, and he could only regret that they had not several thousand miles before them, before completing their journey.

Spikes knew nothing of her appearance on deck, so he remained below in the engine-room, studying the working of the machinery, and wondering whether he was not as competent to take charge as was the regular engineer. So our hero and heroine were left to themselves for some time

The air was crisp and cool, but not enough so to be unpleasant, and they paced back and forth on the deck, side by side, admiring the scenery along the banks, and discussing a thousand and one matters, such as naturally suggest themselves to two young persons who are mutually pleased at being thrown into each other's society.

The right bank was covered with forest, that stretched away almost in a dead level; on the left was both wood and prairie, while far in the distance the faint outlines of a mass of mountains could be seen, their peaks appearing almost as blue as the horizon against which they were outlined.

To add to the picturesqueness of the scene, three Indian canoes, with half a dozen occupants in each, were seen coming down the Yellowstone, close to the other shore.

The two stopped in their walk and stood contemplating it.

"You must sketch this, Miss McHavens, by all means," enthusiastically exclaimed Lieutenant Putnam. "Could you have a better subject?"

"It is very good," said she; "those peaks in the distance, the prairie and wood between, and those 'noble red-men,' make up a fine landscape."

She turned to go to her apartment, her friend escorting her to the door. When they had descended the steps, they came face to face with Jabez Spikes, who was evidently surprised to see them together.

"Hello, Ady!" he exclaimed, "I didn't know you had got up yet. I'm glad to see you, Ady, by ginger if I ain't! How are you, Ady?"

"Miss McHavens is my name, if you please," she answered bowing rather coldly as she passed on.

"Don't presume too much on your acquaintance, Jabez," said Putnam, in a low tone, as they were left alone for a few minutes. He really did not wish to see the Yankee rebuked so sharply that his feelings would be touched, and he gave the hint in all kindness; but Jabez looked lofty and dignified as before.

"Ady and I understand each other; I know well—yes, very well, what she means by that; it is out of respect for your feelings—yes, *your* feelings, that caused her to speak in

that apparently acrimonious tone. She doesn't wish me to address her by her pet name when you are present."

"Oh, that's it," returned the lieutenant, stroking his handsome mustache to prevent Spikes from seeing his smile. "Very well; I will not attempt to interfere between you then."

"I hope you will not," returned Jabez, in the same lofty manner; "it's an unsafe thing to come between married folks and lovers; but I am engaged in studying the intricacy of machinery, and will leave you together for awhile," he added, as he turned about and walked away.

At this juncture, Adrienne reappeared, with her portfolio in hand. When she reached the deck, it required but a few seconds for her to get to work. The genial-natured Captain Bennett, understanding what she was doing, slowed the engine, while Lieutenant Putnam, with her permission, stood behind her, looking over her shoulder and watching her work.

Ah! Adrienne McHavens, as your beautiful hand, with its tiny pencil, glided over the snow-white sheet, transferring the beauties of wood, and river, and prairie, and mountain to its surface, your bewitchingly taper fingers drew *another* picture.

And it was the picture of your own sweet self, drawn in lines which could never be obliterated, upon the heart of the lieutenant, who stood so admiringly near you, and he felt, too, that it was a painting never equaled by the marvelous, angelic faces of old Murillo.

Adrienne sketched very rapidly, and it required but a few minutes for her to finish all the outlines, when she began "filling in." She took particular pains with this part of her work, and when at last it was completed, the lieutenant declared that it was equal to a steel engraving.

"That was drawn by the hand of an artist," he added, as she handed it to him. She smiled, and was pleased at the compliment, for she knew it was an honest one, intended for no flattery.

"You are pleased with it then, are you?"

"I am delighted with it."

She reached up and took it again from his hand, and with her pencil rapidly wrote: "*View on the Yellowstone. To Lieutenant Putnam, from A. McH.*" and then handed it back to him.

"Will you accept it, then?"

The young officer was overjoyed, and bowing low, he said:

"If I live to reach home, that shall have the finest frame that can be procured for it, and the place of honor in my house."

"You are too indulgent toward it," she replied, as she closed her portfolio and allowed it to lie upon her lap. "But to change the subject, do you know what a longing desire I have had ever since we left the scenes of civilization?"

"I certainly can not imagine."

"I want to take a run on shore. I feel so cramped on this boat that the sensation begins to amount to a discomfort."

"Have you not been on shore at all?"

"Scarcely placed my foot upon dry land, except for a moment, when we halted to 'wood up,' as they call it. Captain Bennett would not allow me to go out of sight, and the men were too busy for any one to be spared as my escort."

"At the very next stopping-place you shall have a ramble through the woods, if you will permit me to act as your *cicerone*."

"Nothing will please me better," she replied.

"Unless—"

The lieutenant paused with a significant smile, as if waiting for an invitation to proceed.

"Unless what?"

"My friend, Mr. Spikes, takes charge of you. Really, I do not know whether he will permit such assumption on my part."

Adrienne merely smiled. She was too much of a lady to denounce the New-Englander, with whom she had had some innocent sport, and the lieutenant intended it only as a piece of pleasantry.

"If you think he will not consent," she replied, "we will steal away without his seeing us, and then trust to his forgiveness when we return."

"I don't suppose you ever indulge in hunting?"

"It is only because I do not get the opportunity. I have a little rifle—a real beauty, which father brought me from

Washington—with which I would dearly love to kill a buffalo or a grizzly bear, or some such pet.”

“Yes, it would be quite an exploit. You have fired your gun?”

“Hundreds of times. I have practiced until I consider myself a good marksman, or markswoman, and I am certain I can bring down a deer as well as any one else.”

“Then we shall have a little hunt together. Game is so plenty in this part of the world that we shall be sure to discover something. How long does Captain Bennett generally wait when wooding up?”

“It takes a good half-day, at least; you know the wood is not piled up and waiting for them, as it is along the Mississippi, but it has to be cut, and taken on board, and even with all the men hard at work, that is no slight task.”

“I will ask the captain when he proposes to make another halt,” said Lieutenant Putnam, as he walked forward to the pilot-house.

“Do you see that bend ahead on the left, about a half-mile distant?” said Captain Bennett, when the question was proposed.”

“Certainly,” was the reply.

“There’s where we shall tie up till night; there’s a splendid growth of oak and pine there, and I always stop there, going up and coming down.”

Putnam returned with the gratifying information to Adrienne.

“Now get your gun and ammunition ready,” he added, “for we will spend the whole afternoon in rambling through the woods, if you desire it.”

“I wish to hunt till I get so tired that I can hunt no longer,” was the characteristic reply.

Such being the case, she went below to put herself in trim for the expedition. She had prepared herself for such a “contingency,” and arrayed herself in a close-fitting and becoming dress, of strong material, and so arranged as to allow a free movement of the limbs, with high, thick, and handsome shoes, and a sort of jockey hat, with her luxuriant hair gathered close to her head and neck, and thus arrayed, she looked like an Indian princess prepared for the chase.

"If some one would only draw a true picture of *you*," thought the lieutenant, scarcely able to conceal his admiring glance, "it would take the prize at any exhibition."

With a woman's thoughtful foresight she provided a substantial lunch, which she gave in charge of her gallant, while she persisted in carrying her own gun.

"I want it for instant use," she said, as she took it from his hand, after he had sufficiently admired the beauty of its workmanship. "Suppose I should step on a grizzly bear, and he should jump at me—what would I do, with no weapon in my hand?"

"Give me the happiness of shooting him for you."

"But you might miss," she laughed.

At this juncture Jabez Spikes suddenly made his appearance upon the scene.

"Ginger! where you going?" he asked, in surprise

"The boat is to stop up the river to get some wood," replied Adrienne, "and we are going to take a little hunt in the woods."

"I guess I'll go along, to take care of you," he added.

"We thank you, Mr. Spikes, but don't you think we are old enough to take care of ourselves?"

"Yes—but, ginger! I forgot! I have an engagement and can't go with you. Never mind, don't grieve, Ady; we'll sit and talk over it to-night," he added, as he walked away.

Jabez Spikes spoke the truth, when he declared he had an engagement. Always ready to turn an honest penny, he had agreed to assist in cutting and carrying wood during the entire afternoon, for the sum of one dollar, and that was why he couldn't form one of the hunting-party upon the contemplated expedition.

By and by the steamboat turned her prow toward shore, and came to rest at the same "wharf" where she had made it her custom to halt for wood in going up and down the river. It still lacked an hour or two of noon, and as soon as the boat was secure, the men sprung ashore, axes in hand, ready for labor, Jabez Spikes being among them.

Captain Bennett had carefully scanned the bank up and down stream, as they approached shore, but could distinguish

no sign of Indians. When they penetrated thus far north, they were liable to encounter the Indians, who were friendly or hostile, as the whim took them. He had generally managed to conciliate them by a few presents, when they appeared, but he knew there was no little risk incurred from these treacherous miscreants, every time the opportunity for mischief was placed in their hands.

The presence of Adrienne McHavens on board, made him more than usually solicitous, and it was with some misgiving that he saw her plunge into the wood, accompanied only by Lieutenant Putnam. He cautioned them against venturing too far away, and they promised to heed his counsel, as she waved him a good-by and vanished in the wood.

"There is one thing certain," muttered Captain Bennett, as he looked after them, "that young lieutenant is dead in love with her, and I think she rather fancies him. Well, well, there might be a great many worse couples than they would make."

CHAPTER IX.

THE HUNT, AND A FEARFUL DISCOVERY.

BEFORE our hero and heroine placed foot upon *terra firma*, the latter called the attention of the former to a sort of "butte," i. e., a round, cylindrical shaped hill, one or two hundred feet in elevation, the top covered with stunted vegetation, and distant about a mile.

Adrienne having expressed a wish to visit it, they immediately turned their steps thitherward. The luxuriant vegetation immediately surrounding them shut off their view for most of the time, but now and then, through the openings in the wood, they caught glimpses of it, and were thus enabled to keep the right direction.

It was only a pleasant walk though the fragrant woods, and the gentle exercise was found so agreeable, that they kept straight along, chatting and laughing in the same merry-hearted manner as when upon the boat. Adrienne's step was

the buoyant, elastic spring of youth, vigor and grace, and experienced as was the lieutenant in athletic exercises, he found his match in keeping pace with her.

"We will first visit that," said she, referring to the hill, "and see whether it is possible to ascend it, and then we will make our hunt in coming back."

"You ought to have brought your portfolio, so as to make a sketch from the top," replied our hero.

"No, I have no time to trifle now; we have come up on *business*."

"But business which looks very much like *sport*," laughed the lieutenant.

Just then they crossed a narrow belt of prairie, covered with rank, exuberant grass, through which they made their way, and entered the woods again. Shortly after they found themselves at the base of the *butte*.

It proved quite an imposing curiosity, its sides being rough, clayey and rocky, and towering to a great height. From the side where they stood and looked up, it was as nearly perpendicular as possible, so that ascending it from that standpoint was out of the question.

"Perhaps it may be possible from the other side," said the lieutenant, as he moved away. "I've seen such elevations before, and they generally tapered off into a sort of inclined plane on one side, making it quite easy to climb them—hello! hurrah!"

He had just made the discovery that this was no exception to the general rule. From the top of the *butte* a regular incline, almost entirely free from trees, swept off until it united with the wood, several hundred feet away.

"That gives us the chance," exclaimed Adrienne, as she hurried away, so as to make the coveted ascent.

Lieutenant Putnam followed hard after, but he was scarcely able to keep pace with the fair huntress. Springing lightly upon the rising ground, she ran like a deer to the top, her merry laughter ringing out upon the air, as she dared him to overtake her. He accepted the challenge and strove to his utmost to catch the flitting fairy; but all in vain; he yet lacked a rod or two of the top, when she clapped her hands and called back to him that he was beaten.

"Yes, fairly defeated in the race," he replied, as he came panting to her side.

"And now was it not worthy of such a journey?" she asked, as she turned her face toward the river which they had just left. From their elevation, their view commanded an area numbering hundreds of square miles. Looking to the north-west they could trace the course of the great Yellowstone for a long distance, until it was finally lost to view in the mighty solitudes which stretched away for thousands of miles beyond. Mountains and solitary peaks reared their heads against the blue sky—prairies, woods and streams were visible in every direction; all together making up a scene such as is impossible in any country except our own.

The steamer which they had left but a short time before was concealed from view by the wood that came down to the very edge of the water, where it was gathering its food for its further ascent of the great stream; but, the peculiar curvature of the river enabled them to locate it, and watching closely they managed to detect the faint smoke issuing from its smoke-stacks as it lay at rest.

Nor was the element of life wanting from this beautiful landscape. Almost at the very foot of the *butte*, almost perpendicularly beneath them, they distinguished a solitary deer, with antlers raised, as if it were contemplating the sight of a white man and woman for the first time in wonderment.

"I think I can hit him from here," said the lieutenant; "would you like to try your skill upon him?"

"No, and you shall not either," she warmly replied. "I know I could kill that innocent animal from where I stand, and perhaps you could; but it would be a crime to shed its blood at this time."

"I have no doubt the deer will agree with you," laughed our hero. "Shall we descend to level earth again?"

A few minutes later they were in the woods again, ready for the hunt upon which they had originally started, and they found their game sooner than they anticipated.

They were scarcely a hundred yards from the hill, when Lieutenant Putnam, who was a few feet in advance, suddenly paused, as a trampling, and crackling of the bushes betrayed the approach of some animal.

"'Sh!" he called to Adrienne, raising his hand to keep her quiet, "there is our game; have your gun ready."

The words had scarcely escaped him, when he caught sight of something dark through the shrubbery, and a moment after a gigantic grizzly bear came lumbering to view, scarcely a half-dozen yards from them.

"Heaven save us!" fairly gasped the lieutenant, as he recoiled a step or two, "that is more than I expected."

The mammoth brute paused for a moment, as if he was naturally surprised at encountering such company in his solitudes; but he did not seem particularly displeased at the sight, and after contemplating them for a moment, turned to move away.

At this juncture, Adrienne McHavens concluded it was time to interfere. This was altogether too great a prize to be allowed to slip from their grasp, and bringing her rifle to her shoulder, she fired, lodging the bullet in the hide of the animal.

"Load again," admonished the lieutenant, who comprehended what a mistake had been made, "and the next time aim at his head."

The shot had only angered, without seriously injuring the bear, who reared himself on his hind legs for an instant, uttering an ominous, cavernous growl, that displayed his large white teeth and red mouth, and then, dropping on all fours again, made straight for those who had inflicted the injury.

Conscious that they were now in great personal danger, the lieutenant admonished Adrienne to fly, while he dispatched the brute.

"You haven't dispatched him yet," was her significant reply, as she began reloading her piece, and bravely held her ground.

Our hero waited until the bear was scarcely twenty feet away, when taking a quick aim at its head he fired. At the very instant of his firing, the bear, from some cause or other, slightly ducked his head, so that what otherwise would have been a fatal shot, only dangerously wounded him, greatly increasing his fury.

He had no time to reload his rifle, and dropping it, and drawing his revolver, he popped away at it with about as

much effect as though he were firing against an iron-clad monitor.

Having emptied his pistol, without checking his advance, as a last resort Lieutenant Putnam drew his knife for the final struggle. He would have fled, but for the presence of Adrienne. Should he elude its clutches, it would be certain to turn upon her, who had no pistol or knife to assist her, and who, therefore, had little chance of escaping its fury.

When, therefore, the bear was near enough to strike, he reared himself again, and made a terrific blow at the young officer with one of his great paws. Putnam skillfully dodged the blow, and buried his keen hunting-knife to the hilt in the body of his foe, who, maddened by the sharp pain, turned upon him with a fierceness which would not permit his escape.

The two fell to the ground side by side, the lieutenant dashing his hat in the eyes of his frightful foe, so as to confuse him and prevent him closing his appalling mouth upon his arm or any part of the body, while at the same time he struggled to the utmost to escape from the grasp of his relentless foe.

It is not often that the most powerful and skillful hunter comes off victor in a hand-to-hand struggle with a beast of such ferocious strength as the grizzly bear, and despite the wounds of the brute on the present occasion, he would have been compelled to succumb, but for the assistance of his fair companion.

There was a moment when man and brute lay motionless for an instant upon the ground, each undecided, for the second, what to do. At this critical moment, Adrienne McHavens stepped forward, and placing the muzzle of her weapon almost against the eye of the brute, sent the bullet into his brain.

At the same moment, the imprisoned man, by a powerful effort, freed himself from the tremendous grip of the bear and sprang unharmed to his feet. The dying bear struggled furiously for a few seconds, clawing the ground and leaves, and flinging them from him, and finally he stretched out in death.

"Are you injured badly?" inquired Adrienne, with no little solicitude, of Lieutenant Putnam, when she was sure that all further danger was past.

"I do not think I have a scratch," replied our hero, as he looked over his person. "I am not conscious of the least pain."

So it proved. By dashing his hat in the face of the beast, he so bewildered him for the short time they were clasped together, that the young officer found himself unharmed, the sleeve of his coat being slightly torn by the claws of the animal.

"Thank Heaven! I escaped," was the fervent exclamation, when he became assured that there was no wound upon his person; "and through you, my dear friend, my life was saved."

"And as it was through me that you received the unpleasant attack, I should consider *that* account about square," laughed Adrienne; "but what are we going to do with this lovely creature, now that we have secured him? He is rather too bulky for us to carry to the boat, and I suppose it is out of our power to induce him to walk."

"The only thing like a substitute for his body is his hide, and I confess my knowledge of ursine anatomy is not sufficient for me to undertake to secure that trophy for you."

"I am not particularly anxious to have that. I think one of those terrible claws of his would answer better."

"True, such a trophy would be far preferable," replied the lieutenant, as he caught up his knife and speedily severed the frightful weapon from one of the feet of the brute.

"There," said he, as he handed them to Adrienne, "if any one should ever express a doubt of your having killed a grizzly bear, just rattle those in his face."

"I think they would make a fine necklace," laughed Adrienne, as she examined them. "My dusky admirer, whose features I scanned, wore such an ornament around his neck."

"*He* certainly would rejoice to see them there."

"I will wait and consult Mr. Spikes," she laughed, as she returned them to her companion.

The latter looked at them a moment, and then folded them up in a handkerchief. They were fully six inches in length, the ends being considerably worn from abrading against other substances, but they were still of sufficient size to attest the great bulk of the grizzly bear, whom they had been so fortunate as to slay.

"Do you consider this sufficient for the afternoon's sport?" asked the lieutenant of Adrienne, as he placed himself at her disposal.

"It ought to be; but it will be several hours before Captain Bennett will expect us; we need not hurry to return to the boat."

So thought the lieutenant, who would have been glad of a week's ramble with such a charming companion; and, as there was no cause for taking any particular direction, they sauntered along, waiting until something should present itself for their rifles.

By and by they reached a small stream of water, which they had not seen when going the other way, and this they followed until they found its source in a large stream of clear, icy-cold water.

As it was considerably beyond the hour of noon, and both quite hungry, they selected this as the proper place in which to take their lunch. So Putnam produced the parcel of food, which he had cast aside when engaged in the terrific struggle with the bear, and they seated themselves upon the leaves beside the sparkling water.

"Talk of wine, or whisky, or champagne," said the lieutenant, as he quaffed the tasteless yet most delicious of all fluids from a cup that Adrienne had skillfully made from leaves, "what is there to equal that?"

"Nothing," honestly responded the girl, as she joined him in the "temperance festival." "I can agree with your sentiments on *that*."

There was something indescribably charming in all this to Lieutenant Putnam. The exhausting run up the *butte* and the fearfully trying encounter with the grizzly bear, made him long for rest, and lolling lazily upon the leaves, hungry as a tiger, and eating the well-cooked food, with the bright-eyed, bewitching Adrienne McHavens, why should he not be happy?

But the Shadow came, when most unexpected.

They had finished their meal, and were chatting in their usual way, when Adrienne suddenly remarked, pointing to the swampy earth a few feet above the spring:

"There are the foot-prints of some animal or person."

Lieutenant Putnam sprung up, and carefully examined it.

"As sure as I live," he exclaimed, in a frightened undertone, "it is the print of a moccasin, and there are more of them."

A brief scrutiny of the surrounding ground showed that a large number of Indians had been there recently.

"I should think hundreds of them would come every day to such a delicious spring," replied Adrienne, without any appearance of alarm. "I see nothing singular in that."

"It may not be singular, but it is alarming, nevertheless," was the reply of our hero, as he glanced furtively about, as if expecting the appearance of some of the dreaded beings. "I would rather encounter a half-dozen grizzly bears than as many Indians."

"Are none of them friendly?"

"Not in this part of the world," was the earnest reply. "Miss McHavens, it will be the part of prudence to leave this place without a moment's delay."

"I am ready," she replied, feeling that there must be some cause for this alarm. "The boat itself might be in danger."

"I hardly think that; but we ought to be there."

The unalloyed pleasure which had been theirs when setting out upon the hunt was now gone, and they were only anxious to reach the steamer, and get out of the woods, in which they knew so much danger impended.

The rustling of the leaves under their feet, or the sighing of the wind overhead alarmed them, and Adrienne found herself frequently glancing behind her, as one does who fears the approach of a foe, and wondering at the time it took them to reach the steamer.

But at last they caught the shining of the water through the trees, and saw that they had reached the Yellowstone, at a point considerably above where the steamer was lying.

Lieutenant Putnam had been revolving the fears that Adrienne had expressed regarding the safety of Captain Bennett and his crew, and he had recalled his own ominous forebodings of the night before.

It was these which caused him to say:

"Do you remain here until I return. There possibly may be something wrong at the boat, although I haven't much apprehension."

Adrienne consented, and her companion departed. She waited patiently for his return, and by and by he made his appearance. She saw at once, from his pale face, that he had something startling to communicate.

"Adrienne," said he, in a horrified whisper, "*Captain Bennett and his crew have been massacred by the Indians, and the boat is swarming with them!*"

CHAPTER X.

THE MASSACRE.

It was appalling news indeed, and for a few moments Adrienne was unable to utter a word, and Lieutenant Putnam was scarcely less excited. Then, instead of bewailing her own situation, she exclaimed in a choking voice:

"My poor uncle! is he dead?"

"I do not see how one of them could have escaped. There seems to be fully a hundred Indians swarming all over the boat."

"But I hear no noise."

"That looks as though they knew of our absence, and were purposely quiet for the purpose of entrapping us."

Drawn closer together by the appalling misfortune and the awful danger that menaced both, the two young people turned their backs upon the doomed steamer, and stealthily made their way through the woods, conscious that what was once their "house of refuge," was now death itself.

Lieutenant Putnam took the unresisting hand of Adrienne in his own, and when they had gone a hundred yards or so he suddenly paused.

"It may possibly be, dearest," he said, in a low, affectionate voice, "that all of our friends are not dead."

"Do you think my poor uncle or any of the others have been spared?" she asked, her tones and looks showing how deep was her solicitude.

"There seems to me to be a slight chance of it; will you wait here while I go back and try to ascertain?"

"But suppose they should discover *you*?" she exclaimed, impetuously, as she seized his arm.

Her looks and manners thrilled the lieutenant, and for the time drove all other thoughts out of his mind. Looking down on the upturned face, with the yearning tenderness of love, he asked:

"It would leave you desolate and without one to defend you; but, if it were otherwise, would it occasion you a pang of regret?"

"Oh! how can you?" she wailed, covering her face with her hands.

"Forgive me," said he, "it was selfish and cruel in me, but your emotion has raised a hope in my heart that cheers me even in this dreadful moment; but we must work. Do not stir from this spot; I will be back in half an hour, and then we will see what is to be done."

Bidding her good-by for a short time, Lieutenant Putnam moved away in the direction of the steamer, working his way with the caution and stealth of a man who knows what peril he encounters.

Creeping to the edge of the wood, he saw the little steamer, lying just as it had been left, and he observed that it was beginning to "blow off" steam, and consequently was generating it, with a dangerous rapidity.

There seemed to be Indians everywhere. They were swarming the upper deck, and he saw them flitting back and forth, but not a sign of a white man was visible.

"Oh, heavens! can it be that they are all murdered?" groaned our hero, as he gazed at the dusky miscreants. "No; there is Jabez Spikes, as sure as the world!"

As he spoke he saw the Yankee appear on the upper deck, and walk to the wheel-house as unconcernedly as though these were new hands that he had just engaged. Catching hold of the whistle-rope, he gave a loud and long signal, all the time looking toward the shore, and perfectly heedless of the Indians about him.

Then, as he let go the rope, he shouted at the top of his voice, which, under no circumstances, could be considered a weak one.

"*Lieutenant Putnam! if you value your life and that of*

Ady, for God's sake KEEP AWAY! The Indians have murdered all but me, and are waiting your return! That's true as gospel, by ginger!"

Lieutenant Putnam understood the meaning of this. The alarm upon the whistle, and the shouted words, were intended to warn him of his danger. It was an act of true bravery upon the part of Spikes, thus to risk bringing down the immediate vengeance of the Indians upon him, and the heart of the officer warmed toward him with admiration and gratitude for the act.

"There *is* something in you worthy of admiration," he muttered, as he still watched the proceedings.

Jabez Spikes having performed his duty, cast another lingering look at the shore, as if searching for his friends, and then he called out to the Indians:

"Unfasten those ropes, or I'll break all your heads!"

Inasmuch as none of the red-skins understood a word of English, there was not much risk in such epithets. The peril in attempting to warn his friends was that the savages would understand his object, from his manner and actions alone.

So, in the present instance, his gesticulations were such that his purpose was comprehended, and several nimble Indians undid the fastenings in a twinkling. As the boat then began to drift down-stream with the current, Spikes quickly fastened the wheel in the proper place, and then hastened below to start the engine, that was already blowing off steam at a fearful rate.

A moment later, the wheel began revolving with great velocity, dashing the water in foam. The steamer almost instantly stopped floating with the current, remained stationary a moment, and then began moving upward with a swift and ever-increasing speed.

By this time the dusky dogs had learned the use of the bell and whistle, and they kept up a constant clanging with the former, and a most unearthly shrieking with the latter, all the time dancing about the deck like delighted children.

Lieutenant Putnam stood with a sad heart, and watched the swiftly-receding boat, until finally, as the shades of night began settling over the river, it disappeared around a bend in the river above, and even when invisible itself the clangor

and whistling, and screeching of the delighted Indians were borne to him through the woods over the water.

Finally he turned about and made all haste to where Adrienne was awaiting him in no little alarm.

"Forgive me for remaining away so much longer than I promised," said he, as he took her trembling hand in his, and for the first time, ventured to kiss the pearl-tinted cheek. "But I staid to learn all that was possible."

"And is uncle living?" she eagerly asked.

He sadly shook his head.

"There is no hope of it; they have spared only one man, and it is not likely that he will be allowed to live much longer. I suppose they have kept him to teach them how to manage the boat."

"Mr. Britton, the engineer?"

"No, it is Jabez Spikes, whom they have elected to that office, although I can not imagine for what reason; but the fellow did a real brave act in our behalf."

And then Lieutenant Putnam proceeded to relate every thing that he had seen and learned up to the time when the steamer vanished from sight.

The important question now remained as to what they should do. Both were provided with their weapons and a moderate supply of ammunition, but their great deprivation was that neither had a horse, nor was it possible to see any way of obtaining one.

"What we do must be done on foot," said the lieutenant, with something like grim humor.

"That will not hurt us," was the ready reply of Adrienne, "if it is only possible to do it. I wonder that some of the Indians did not track us, instead of waiting for us to return."

"I feared that, but I suppose they were too much elated over their prize to bestow any attention upon us."

As the steamer, before her capture, had penetrated a long distance up the Yellowstone, the only course left for our friends seemed to be that of pressing forward, so as to intercept Colonel McHavens and his party. The distance necessary to traverse, in order to do this, was much less than it would be were they to turn about and attempt to reach the border elements.

Then the great difficulty remained as to the direction necessary to pursue in order to reach them. The lieutenant, as a matter of course, was a total stranger in the country, and without any means of guidance.

"Why not follow the river?" asked Adrienne.

"That's it," he exclaimed, delightedly. "I believe I will have you act as guide; that is all we can do. Shall we press forward now, or wait until morning?"

"Let us get as far away from this place as possible," answered Adrienne, with a shudder. "We can go many miles before morning."

"Come on, then."

It was nearly dark, and as the sky was quite cloudy, the night bid fair to be one of intense gloom, so that there was little prospect of penetrating to any great distance after all.

"We shall need all our strength," said our hero. "And it will not be wise to tax it too much at the beginning of our journey."

"It will not harm us to walk the night through," replied Adrienne, "and I can not sleep in these dreadful woods after all this."

"There is no telling what you can do."

Our hero and heroine pressed onward until the gloom around them seemed absolutely impenetrable. They could tell they were in the vicinity of the river, by the sound of its flow, and finally they came to a stand-still, satisfied that it was imprudent to venture further, until they had the light of day to guide them.

To their surprise, they found themselves at the base of the *butte* which they had visited during the afternoon.

"We will make our first encampment on top of that," said Putnam. "We shall not be as likely to be disturbed by wild animals up there as down here."

They made their way to the top, and halted on the spot where, a few hours before, they had looked off over the landscape with such different emotions as agitated them now.

"I always carry a match-safe with me," said the officer. "Shall I kindle a fire for you?"

"No; for that would be like inviting capture."

"Very well; I will leave you to make yourself as com

fortable as possible, while I act as sentinel over your slumbers."

Bidding her good-night, Lieutenant Putnam walked part way down the incline, and then paused and arranged his "beat" for the night.

As we have intimated, the sky was filled with clouds, and unlit by moon or star. It was darkness in every direction, and the only sound that reached his ears, as he stood and listened, was the mournful sighing of the night-wind through the trees.

As he began his pacing back and forth, a heavy, booming sound, that seemed to make the whole air shudder, came to his ears. He paused, and looked up to the sky.

"If a storm comes, we shall be in a sad plight," he mused. "We have no blankets with us, and nothing but trees for shelter."

He listened, but no more peals of thunder were heard, and he began to hope that the threatened storm would pass over. This hope was strengthened by a slight clearing up of the sky shortly after, and he began speculating upon the prospect of extricating himself and Adrienne from the unpleasant situation, to say the least, in which they were placed.

It was a wearisome tramp, for although he had the blissful consciousness that he was keeping watch over his beloved, yet he was deprived of her presence, and the sound of her voice. Hour after hour dragged slowly by, and with a delight which it would be difficult to describe, he saw that it was growing unmistakably light in the east.

As soon as it was fairly day, he saw Adrienne approaching, and replying to her salutations, he inquired how she spent the night.

"I did not close my eyes for an instant in sleep" she replied, with a light laugh.

"How is that?" he asked, in amazement.

"I was too much excited over the dreadful events of yesterday, and too busy praying and thinking over our own situation; and then, besides that, I spread some branches upon the ground for my bed, I found that I was not cold, but just a little *too* uncomfortable to sleep. If I had only brought my blanket along, there would have been no difficulty."

"You must not suffer that way again to-night."

"I can not say that I really suffered ; but I was in such a condition of mind and body, that sleep was out of the question."

"I will shoot some animal to-day, and we will make a blanket out of his skin, and you shall rest in peace and comfort after this."

Enough of their lunch remained to afford them a good breakfast, and this was eaten at the base of the *butte*.

"Now, remain here a few moments, while I bring you a cup of water," said Putnam, springing to his feet and hurrying away.

He thought he knew where a brook was close at hand, and he found it, as he anticipated, but a few rods away. Carefully filling his cup, he started to return, deviating somewhat from his route, as he did so.

He had gone but a short distance, when he was startled by the sight of a dead Indian stretched out upon the ground. He paused a moment, and then approached closer and examined the body. It was so torn and mangled that he knew at once that he had been killed by an encounter with some wild beast. His rifle was broken in several pieces, and scarcely any of the clothing remained upon his lacerated body. Undoubtedly he was slain by the very grizzly bear, that, in his turn, had been killed by Adrienne McHavens.

Near at hand remained his heavy, finely-worked blanket, the very thing that our friends needed. Overcoming his natural repugnance, the lieutenant picked up this useful article of clothing and hastened with it to Adrienne, who, as may be supposed, was not a little surprised and delighted. In reply to inquiries, he stated that he had found it hard by, and it had probably belonged to some Indian, who had no further use for it.

All of which was strictly true.

Throwing the blanket over his arm, Lieutenant Putnam took the lead, and the two lovers, as we may properly term them, started on their perilous and eventful journeyings toward the head-waters of the great Yellowstone of the North-west.

CHAPTER XI.

A FRIGHTFUL AND STRANGE ADVENTURE.

WHEN the doomed steamer halted for the purpose of "wooding up," there were six men engaged in cutting and gathering the fuel.

In this number was included Captain Bennett and Jabez Spikes, who toiled as hard as the hardest, and who labored with scarcely any intermission until quite late in the afternoon. The engineer made occasional visits to his engine to assure himself that all was right, and every thing progressed in a satisfactory manner until the dread calamity came.

It will be remembered that the New-Englander showed no little interest in the working of the machinery of the boat; and, as he was naturally shrewd and keen-witted, he speedily gained a knowledge of it sufficient to enable him to work and control it quite well.

Believing this, the engineer, instead of returning to the boat on the last occasion, sent Jabez, instructing him to examine it carefully and report to him. Quite pleased with the confidence reposed in him, the Yankee hurried on board, went into the engine-room, which was on the lower deck, and then descended into the hold to take a look at the boiler, under which the fire had been permitted to smolder quite low.

As it would soon be time to start, Jabez raked over the coals, and threw in a half a cord or so, for the purpose of firing up. He had just completed this, and had shut the furnace door, and was about ascending to the engine-room again, when he was startled by what seemed the dashing of a thousand sticks of wood upon the deck, but which he found, after a minute's listening, was caused by the hurried tramp of numerous feet.

He peered up from the dark apartment in which he stood, and was terrified at seeing several Indians in turn peering down upon him. He realized then that the boat was in the hands of the savages!

What was to be done ?

Simultaneous with the discovery came the conviction that there was no earthly chance of his escaping, and he determined to cram the furnace chock full of wood, so as to blow himself and his captors up together.

But, before he could act upon this resolution, these Indians leaped down in the hold beside him. Having no weapon with which to defend himself, Jabez caught up a billet of wood, but the savages made signs of peace. They appreciated his usefulness, and indicated their wish that he should join them above.

Cheered thus by a hope of life, Jabez willingly consented, and accompanied them upon the lower deck, where there were fully a hundred Indians. With their hideous faces daubed with ocher and paint, and their fiend-like eyes all agleam with ferocity, with knives and tomahawks to infinity, they formed an array that might well appall the stoutest heart.

Their first proceeding was to dangle the scalps of their five victims in his face, and the poor fellow was in such excess of terror that he could scarcely stand. This proof that the entire crew was massacred was terribly overwhelming, and for one instant he felt himself swooning; but a sense of his own peril roused him, and he put on a face of indifference and bravado, which he was far from feeling.

They jabbered and gesticulated to him, but he could not comprehend a word they uttered, and for a time was too scared to get at the meaning of their signs.

By and by, however, he saw that all this was meant to assure him that he was their man, and that they wished him to take charge of their prize. Having caught him near the engine, they naturally supposed that he was the "admiral," and the only one of the crew that could not be dispensed with. The other five men were stark-dead and stiff in the woods on shore, and their scalps dangled at the girdles of their inhuman murderers.

The certainty that the Indians intended to use him, gave Jabez an exalted opinion of his importance, and so dispelled his fears that he was able to think with some of his natural shrewdness.

"They want me to be their engineer, do they?" he muttered;

"well, I will, and if I don't give them the biggest hoik they ever dreamed of, then my name ain't Jabez Spikes—that's all!"

His thoughts were turned to Lieutenant Putnam and Adrienne. It was so late in the afternoon that he saw they were liable to return any moment, and he determined to save them from falling into the hands of the Indians, if such a thing were possible.

So great was the throng around him, and such was the pressure upon his movements, that it was some time before he could reach the upper deck. When he did so, he issued his warning in the unhesitating manner which we have described, and, satisfying himself that the rudder was so placed that the boat would turn out into the stream, he indulged himself in ordering the Indians to obey him, speaking as he would to a lot of dogs, when he hurried below to the engine-room.

"No, by ginger! clear out the way, all you copper-colored skunks, or I'll kick the heads off you!"

This was a terrible threat; but the mild face and still milder manner conveyed no idea of its meaning to the recipients.

Jabez found that the red-skins had penetrated the engine-room, and were so thronging around that there was a strong probability of some of them getting hurt, of which he was very glad—for if ever a man had an intense desire to injure others, he had to slay those merciless miscreants.

One of the very dogs who had a scalp dangling at his waist, and who, from his dress and appearance seemed to be the leader of the party, was just where Jabez "wanted him." The boiler was blowing off at a terrible rate, and he turned on a full head of steam. Fortunately the engine had not stopped "on the center," and the next instant the piston-rod made a spiteful and furious throb, and then went to work with a violence that threatened to jerk the engine to pieces.

The first plunge it made downward, it struck the same chief on the head, doubling him up in the very midst of a yell, and ending his earthly career forever.

"Curiosity may be carried too far," complacently remarked Spikes, as the other Indians seized hold of the body and hurried out of the room. "I only wish a few more Indians would feel some curiosity to know how the engine works."

The steamer was now gliding up the Yellowstone very swiftly, and Jabez hurried to the upper deck to see that it was following the right direction. A little change of the wheel was all that was necessary, and he returned again to his engine.

By this time it was growing dark, and would soon be intensely so. Running up the river at such speed would necessarily be dangerous, and Jabez determined to make it a great deal more so.

For he had fully resolved to blow up the boat!

He was not yet prepared to be blown up with it, although, were the choice between that and death at the hands of the Indians, he would not have hesitated for an instant; but his intention was to escape from the boat, before the final catastrophe.

So, by gesticulations, he managed to apprise the red-skins of what he wanted, and at his bidding, although with some timidity, they assisted him in again cramming the over-heated furnace with wood, until it really seemed that the heat would set fire to the boat itself. This done, they made their way to the deck.

The engine was working with a fury that caused the boat to throb from stem to stern, and the discharging steam made such an uproar that nothing else could be heard. With his own hand Jabez Spikes fastened down the safety-valve, so that no more clamor could come from *that*, and he also disabled the whistle, so that that infernal screeching was stopped forever.

"She can stand it about a half-hour longer," murmured the Yankee, as he walked along on the upper deck, and peered into the gloom to make sure that they were not running in to shore—"a half-hour more, and this boat will be blown to atoms, and the best thing I can do, therefore, is to take my departure pretty soon."

This was quite an easy matter, for several reasons. There was no suspicion, in the first place, that he contemplated such a proceeding, and consequently he was not watched. He was allowed to pass about the boat unquestioned, the Indians making way for him as though he were a being naturally superior to themselves. In the intense darkness, therefore, all he had

to do was to make his way to the stern and quietly drop overboard, taking care to keep clear of the furious little wheel.

There was some howling and moaning over the chief whose career had been so suddenly cut short by the steam-engine; but the Indians were so occupied with the novelty of their situation that they soon forgot their grief in the new sensation experienced.

They were hurrying to and fro, and thronging in every part of the boat. They had plundered all the rooms and scattered the provisions about them in the most bewildering confusion, while a large party were constantly huddling about the engine-room, never tiring of watching the operations of the machinery.

When the steamer was running at night under the charge of its proper officers, as a matter of course it was plentifully supplied with lanterns, that were displayed in every part of the boat. These lanterns were still on board and ready-trimmed; but Jabez Spikes took care that no more than one of them was lit. This was hung in the engine-room, where, under the present *régime*, it was indispensable. This, with the glare from the over-heated boiler, was all the illumination on board the boat.

There was some wonderment among the Indians that their pet piano, the whistle, was silent, and their only substitute was in clanging the bell, which they swung to and fro, with a never-ceasing vigor.

Jabez Spikes began to grow nervous. He knew that the rapidly accumulating steam must soon find some vent besides that afforded by the working of the machinery, and the explosion was liable to take place at any moment, so he determined to wait no longer.

His first proceeding was to shut off a part of the steam, but still to leave enough to keep the engine going at a moderate rate of speed. Another matter gave the Yankee no little concern. He was only an ordinary swimmer, and he incurred no little risk in trusting himself to the water, but there was no help for it.

Hastily fastening his gun to his back, he seized a large piece of wood, and cautiously made his way to the stern. He encountered plenty of Indians, but no one paid any heed to

him in the darkness. He was but a foot or two above the water, and he hesitated a moment. Then, with a prayer for protection, he leaped over.

Down he went into the cold water, that seemed to chill him to the very marrow. Buoying himself, by means of the large stick to which he had so tenaciously clung, he turned his gaze toward the boat.

He could easily tell where it was by the sparks streaming from the smoke-stacks and the clash and clangor that came from on board.

"You're happy now—tremendously happy," muttered Spikes; "but, by ginger! wait and see how it will be after a while."

So absorbed was Jabez in the scene that he had no thought of himself for the time. He lay motionless in the water, with one leg thrown over the huge stick, which easily supported him, listening and looking.

Ding, dong, went the bell, and the whirr of the foaming wheel, and the whoops and yells of the Indians were the sounds that reached his ears.

"You have murdered innocent and unoffending men," continued Jabez, in a moody tone, "and now you will get your punishment. If you had come on board, like white folks, and asked for a ride, I have no doubt that Captain Bennett—but, you didn't—and heaven—"

The words were checked in his mouth. With his eyes fixed upon the spot, where he knew the steamer was laboring along, he saw a sudden and awful expansion of fire and flame, like the first belching overflow of the crater's mouth, followed by a thunderous boom that reached to the very clouds. There were red, radiating lines from one sun-like focus, shooting far up in the air, then the sound of bodies dropping in the water, awful shrieks of agony, and then all was still!

The boiler had exploded with irresistible force, and the steamer was no more.

For a few moments, Jabez Spikes lay hushed and motionless on his float. Then he drew a sigh.

"That there excursion, considered as a real square excursion upon the part of Lo, I think may be pronounced a failure."

It was now time for Jabez to think about himself. Unfortunately he found, as the sky gradually lightened, that he was close to the eastern bank, and as he wished to reach the western, so as to try and hunt up his friends, he had nearly the whole breadth of the broad river to cross before he could accomplish that.

But he was truly thankful for his wonderful deliverance and he set to work with a will; but he made slow progress. The current carried him rapidly downward, and he approached the western bank at a very tardy rate indeed.

"Ginger! what's up now?" he suddenly exclaimed, as in the dim light he saw a number of dark bodies moving through the water all about him.

At first he thought he was among a lot of Indians, but the next moment he discovered that he had drifted down among a number of buffaloes that were swimming across the river.

They were few in number and were going from the eastern to the western bank. Jabez observed that they were going much faster than he could, and a brilliant idea struck him. He would make one of them tow him!

Slipping off his raft, he made a grab at the tail of the very last one, and caught it. The buffalo gave a snort of alarm, partly turned his head, and plunged along at a fearful rate, but Spikes hung fast.

"Go ahead, old fellow! I don't want to hurt you."

He was towed through the water at a swift rate, but, swift as it was, the trammelled animal could not keep up with his mates, and soon was left out of sight behind them.

The river was broad, and it was a long time before the buffalo reached land; but, at last, his large body, dripping with water, rose above the surface and walked slowly ashore. Jabez still clinging to his "narrative."

"Ginger!" he exclaimed, in breathless amazement, "is it possible?"

Could he believe his eyes? Yes, the animal that had towed him ashore was a WHITE BUFFALO!

CHAPTER XII.

PERILOUS WANDERINGS.

To say that Jabez Spikes was pleased would but feebly express his emotions. Such an unexpected piece of good fortune, following close on his great mishap, produced its natural reaction, and for a time he could scarcely speak.

"Ginger!" he finally gasped, "I've been hunting that Phenomenon, and now the Phenomenon has come to me!"

Yes; it was a veritable white buffalo; there was sufficient light in the sky for him to make sure of that.

The great question now was as to how he was to keep the animal, and what he was to do to prevent its running away. He now had it by the tail, but how long could he hold it thus?

It was evident that the buffalo was very much exhausted, for, after slowly carrying its huge dripping body out of the water for a short distance, without paying the least heed to him who was following so close in its rear, it sunk down upon the ground, breathing like an animal that hadn't strength to do any thing else.

"Ginger! I hope he ain't going to die," exclaimed Jabez, in no little alarm; "that would be too bad, after securing him."

A few minutes, however, showed the true cause of this act, and the Yankee was not a little relieved.

All the other animals had fled, so that man and beast were left alone together. Jabez concluded from the action of the white buffalo that it was quite an aged animal, from the fact that it showed such extreme exhaustion, undoubtedly caused by towing him ashore.

But the great question, as we have said, was as to how the prize was to be kept. By morning, at least, he would be rested, and very likely would lumber away in pursuit of his companions. What, therefore, was to be done?

So great was the anxiety of Jabez on this point that he

forgot his own clothes were saturated, and the night was quite cool. His only thought was how to prevent the buffalo from escaping him in the morning.

The only method that suggested itself was to tame him, and he began that at once, although with very crude ideas as to the proper course to pursue. The buffalo seemed about dropping off to sleep. Hastily plucking some succulent grass growing near, Spikes placed it to the mouth of the animal. At first it paid no heed; then it started, as if about to rise, and then began munching the food.

"He's hungry—the Phenomenon is hungry," concluded the delighted Jabez. "There's nothing like hunger to tame a phenomenon. That's the way my mother used to tame her little phenomenon, Jabez."

The sky grew clearer and brighter each moment, and finally the moon and stars showed themselves. By their light he continued gathering the grass, which, fortunately, grew very luxuriantly about him.

He gathered food, and the buffalo ate, and it displayed a healthy appetite. The more it ate the hungrier it seemed to grow, until even Jabez began to feel some surprise.

"That Phenomenon is hollow, I suppose, and it looks as though I shall have to feed it a week before it gets enough. When I show it through the country, it will take something to keep it in good condition."

Spikes improved his opportunity to the utmost. Every time he brought a bundle of grass he ventured to pat the monster on the head. It was disposed to resent this familiarity at first; but there really seemed to be a great deal of the magnetic Rarey-like power in the man. He had been noted at home for his wonderful skill in breaking and training the most obdurate and vicious horses, and he now exerted himself to the utmost to conquer this white buffalo. Never before had he such an object in doing as much.

Precisely how it was accomplished we can not say, no more than could the novice explain how it was that the great horse-king was able to lead that equine fiend, Cruiser, by a wisp of straw placed in the mouth that had delighted in human blood more than in his natural food.

But when morning dawned Jabez Spikes was the victor

He had subdued the great buffalo so that it was as pliant in his hands as the obedient child under the discipline of its father.

He made himself certain of this by several interesting experiments. At his bidding, the buffalo rose to his feet, and followed him round in a circle, and then at a wave of his hand, he lay down upon the ground. Its great brown eyes seemed to look at his captor with a real yearning affection.

The sun was up, and the day was a clear, pleasant one. The clothes of Spikes had dried upon him, and his incessant motion had prevented any bad consequences following his submergence in the chilly water.

He was in good spirits, but terribly hungry.

"There's no danger of my starving as long as I have you," he mused, as he paused and looked at the buffalo, "but, ginger! I will have to be a blamed sight hungrier than I am now before I would shoot you."

He carefully drew the wet charge from his gun, and as carefully reloaded it, so as to be ready for any emergency, and then he debated seriously as to the next step. His anxiety was to discover Lieutenant Putnam and Adrienne, who, he knew, must be somewhere in the neighborhood at no great distance.

"Ady is a purty nice kind of a girl, and when she finds I've caught the Phenomenon of the West, I guess— Ginger! what's that?"

Something like a laugh struck upon his ear, and turning his head, he saw Lieutenant Putnam and Adrienne McHavens standing behind him.

"We are glad to see you," said the officer, as he reached out his hand; "you have been extremely fortunate in escaping so well."

"Yes; you should be thankful indeed," added our heroine, as she put her delicate white hand in his.

"Ginger! this pleases me," grinned Jabez, at the warmth of the salutation.

"Tell us all about it," added the lieutenant, in a serious voice. "I was watching the boat and saw you when you warned us to keep back."

"You heard me, then, did you?"

"Yes, plainly."

"And it was a brave act in you," added Adrienne, with glowing eyes, for she really liked the eccentric Yankee.

"Wasn't that massacre awful?" he exclaimed. "It makes me shudder all over to think of it."

"And what a wonderful escape you had."

"I did, and I thank God for it!" replied Jabez, as he uncovered his head, and looked reverently upward. "I didn't deserve such mercy, and I shall never forget it."

"But tell us how it all happened."

"Well, I'll begin at the beginning."

Whereupon Jabez proceeded to relate in detail what has already been given to the reader. It was a thrilling recital, and hero and heroine listened with rapt attention to its close. The dreadful deaths of Captain Bennett and his crew hung like a pall over them, and oppressed them at times with an unspeakable sadness.

But all were young, and a natural reaction resulted. There were times when all threw off this incubus, and were their natural selves again.

"How extraordinary that you should have captured the very white buffalo, about which you have so often dreamed, and for which you have so often sighed."

"Yes, that *is* queer," assented Jabez; "I made a grab at his tail, as he was passing, and there he is!"

The subject of the discourse was standing some distance back of them, quietly browsing the grass, with an indifference of manner that looked as if he were not aware of the presence of human beings so near him.

"Why doesn't he run away?" asked Adrienne, with some perplexity.

"Because the Phenomenon is *tamed*."

"Tamed already?" asked the lieutenant, in surprise.

"Just look; I'll show you. Here, Phenomenon!"

Jabez made a chirruping noise, such as is common when one wishes to hurry a horse. The buffalo instantly raised his head and looked inquiringly at him. He beckoned with his hand for the bull to approach. It did so, and paused only a foot or two in front of him.

Standing motionless, Spikes then began moving in a circle,

walking backward, and signaling to the brute to do the same. It obeyed with a readiness which, to say the least, was extraordinary. He frequently changed his course, when the bull promptly did the same. Then, at another wave of the hand, it lay down like a dog at the word of his trainer.

Finally he dismissed it with another wave of his hand, and it resumed its browsing of the grass.

Adrienne clapped her hands with delight.

"How did you do it?"

"I can't tell," replied Jabez, in his lofty manner, "I suppose it is a natural gift of mine."

"It must be, indeed."

"Now, wait till I get him home! Won't I be a hero? Won't Mary Ann Stiggins tear all her hair out, when she sees me coming into the village, a-sitting on the top of my box-wagon, with the *Phenomenon of the Great West*?"

"The only difficulty now is to get him home—"

"Ginger! have you got any thing to eat?" suddenly demanded Jabez; "there's a tremendous holler in me that wants filling up!"

"Yes; we have just breakfasted, and have a good lunch left," replied the lieutenant. "I am glad I can give you something."

"So am I, you bet!"

Lieutenant Putnam had laid aside what he thought would be an abundance for dinner for himself and companion; but, when Jabez had finished, not a particle was left!

"Don't suppose you've got any more?" he asked, with longing looks.

"Not a bit; perhaps we can shoot another buffalo," laughed our hero, "and you might manage to finish your meal off of him—that is, if he were a pretty good-sized one."

"No, thank you, I can wait till noon. Well, I s'pose it's time we started on our tramp."

"And which way shall it be?"

The only thing possible to do seemed to be to attempt to reach Colonel McHavens and his party, as a retreat to the States was out of the question.

As near as they could conjecture, three or four more days' journey would take them to the neighborhood of the explor

ing party. There was but one means of counting upon reaching them, and that was by keeping the general direction of the Yellowstone.

There was no little peril to be encountered in doing this, for the ferocious red-skins were all around them, and they could only hope, through the kindness of Providence and their own unremitting vigilance, to make their way through the labyrinth of danger in which they were involved.

So the party started, taking a general north-west direction. Spikes, with his buffalo, acted as the advanced guard, while the lieutenant and Adrienne followed close in the rear. The "*Phenomenon*" did not forget his training, and he looked something like a colossal dog walking obediently behind his master.

Their way led through quite a varied country, consisting of wood, prairie and hills, at every part of which they were liable to encounter their inveterate enemies; so, each and all acted as sentinels.

After passing through a partly-wooded cover, they reached a hill, without trees, and on the boundary of a rolling prairie a mile or two in breadth. Spikes being at the head, was on the point of descending the other side, when he suddenly paused, looked an instant, and then hurried back again.

"What is it?" inquired his friends, in no little trepidation.

"A whole party of Indians, on horses."

"Let us keep carefully out of sight, and then they will ride by."

"Ginger! they saw me, and are coming this way. They were going to the west, and made a turn the minute they saw me."

"Let me see."

Lieutenant Putnam stealthily made his way forward until he was able to peer over the hill without risk of being seen.

It only needed a single glance to see that Spikes' fears were well grounded. Something like twenty Indians were seen a half-mile away, galloping straight toward the very spot on the hill where the whites had halted.

"Can it be that they have seen us?" was the question our hero asked himself, "or is this only an accidental turn from the direction they have been following?"

Knowing the vigilance of the Indians, and their extraordinary keenness of vision, he became convinced that they had really descried Jabez, and were coming toward him at a leisurely gallop.

In a few moments they would be on the hill, and then the case would be desperate, to say the least. Flight was out of the question—they could only defend themselves.

"See that your gun is ready," said the lieutenant, as he coolly examined his own weapon. "Dearest Adrienne, you will have to retreat a distance, so as to be out of reach of the flying bullets."

"No," said she; "have not I a gun? I will stay here by you, and will try to do my part in the battle—"

"But, it must not be," interrupted her lover. "Suppose a stray shot should reach you."

"No more likely than that it might strike you. No," she added, in a low voice, and with a look of unutterable love in her eyes, "I shall stay by you; if *you* fall, *I* do not wish to live."

CHAPTER XIII.

THE LAST EXPLOIT OF THE WHITE BUFFALO.

"GINGER!" suddenly exclaimed Jabez Spikes, "what a set of fools we are!"

The two men were lying on their faces, with loaded rifles in hand, looking over the crest and waiting until the Indians came near enough to be fired upon. Adrienne was a few feet below them, with loaded gun also in hand, and acting, as she playfully observed, as the "reserve." The buffalo turned the respite to good account, by cropping the grass which grew rather sparsely around them.

The red-skins continued galloping straight onward, and were now no more than a quarter of a mile distant, when Jabez made his suppressed exclamation.

The lieutenant looked inquiringly at him.

"I'm going to put the Phenomenon forward, and let him act as the advance guard."

"I don't see what good that can do."

"I will soon show you."

The same chirruping noise was made, and the huge animal lost no time in striding up to his master.

"Go down there and eat the grass," he commanded, pointing over the hill.

The brute looked bewildered for a moment; but when the command was repeated, he walked slowly down the slope toward the open prairie beyond.

"This may lose you your property," whispered the lieutenant.

"And save your lives; isn't it worth it?"

It was a great trial for the Yankee thus to imperil the prize upon which he had staked so much, but he did it cheerfully, not more for his own sake than for that of his friends.

Still, our hero failed to see what good was to be accomplished by this proceeding, and he had little hope of escaping the red-skins who were bearing down upon them, unless the first sally should stagger and turn them to flight.

Nearer and nearer approached the red-skins, whose faces could now be distinguished as their bodies gracefully rose and sunk with the motion of their horses. The lieutenant was already aiming his rifle for the purpose of sending a bullet among them, when the whole party abruptly halted, like a squad of cavalry at the word of command.

Their faces were turned toward the hill, and they were looking intently in that direction.

"Do they see us?" asked the lieutenant.

"No," was the same whispered reply; "they are looking at the Phenomenon."

For a few seconds only did the Indians sit thus motionless, when, with the same unanimity of movement, they wheeled at right-angles and galloped away. And the danger to our friends was passed.

Neither of the two men moved or spoke until the Indians were far beyond all danger of returning. Then Jabez rolled over on his back, kicked his angular legs in air, and laughed, and laughed, and laughed.

"It was the Phenomenon that did it," he finally got breath to exclaim; "don't you understand it?"

It was finally made clear. The Indians, when at a distance, had seen something suspicious on the crest of the hill, and had ridden forward to ascertain what it meant. No doubt they imagined, from the glimpse thus obtained, that it was some white hunter and his horse making his way toward his trapping grounds—so they rode forward to pay him their compliments.

When a nearer approach revealed to them the white buffalo quietly feeding off the grass, they naturally inferred that no white man could be in the immediate vicinity, and without taking the time to look further, they changed their course and continued onward in the direction upon which they had originally started.

This was quite an exploit indeed, and reflected no little credit upon Jabez Spikes, who, as will be admitted, had displayed a shrewdness more than once such as would hardly be expected from one in his situation.

The incident demonstrated in a more impressive manner, the never-fleeing danger which constantly hung over our friends. Through a country abounding with such ferocious red-skins, they were to make their way, in all probability for several days.

When the Indians had vanished for some time, they resumed their journey, and continued it without further incident until past noon. By that time Jabez was hungry again, and began to look around for something that would answer for food.

During the afternoon they had seen buffalo and antelope more than once, but had not turned from their course; but when they caught sight of a half-dozen buffalo, browsing near the Yellowstone, Jabez told his friends to remain where they were, while he would show them another use to which the Phenomenon could be put.

This was soon shown. Walking carefully beside his animal, he kept his body interposed between himself and the buffaloes on which he was stealing. When about a hundred yards separated the parties, the animals raised their heads and looked at the approaching stranger, as if to inquire his identity; but

they had evidently seen a white buffalo before, and after staring at him a moment, they resumed their browsing, content to wait until he should join them.

Nigher and nigher approached the Phenomenon until the right point was reached, when Jabez gave the order in a low tone, for the animal to halt. As it did so, he sunk down upon one knee, and took deliberate aim at a young bull, that looked plump and in good condition.

He had learned from Waufy at what part to aim, and when he pulled the trigger, the game, with a spasmodic start, pitched forward and rolled over in his death-agony, while the others, with snorts of terror, thundered away at the top of their speed.

Jabez had made a good selection, and when they came to dress and cook some of the choice steak of the buffalo, they found it as rich, juicy, tender and luscious as the most fastidious epicure could ask.

Proceeding with the same caution, the night came without any other alarm, and they halted in a piece of dense timber, where they concluded not to start a fire. The blanket which Adrienne had been furnished with made her very comfortable, while Jabez and the lieutenant relieved each other through the night, and in this way secured an all-sufficient rest for both.

The next day passed without any thing worthy of particular note. Jabez Spikes, as usual, took the lead, while the lieutenant and Adrienne spent many delicious moments together. The peculiar situation into which both had been thrown, deepened their mutual interest from the beginning, and the time came when Adrienne was compelled to acknowledge to herself that her heart went out to him, and that the world looked all dark to her without his presence by her side.

Those moments when the impending danger brought them closer together were sweet and never-to-be-forgotten ones to both. They increased the growth of the all-potent passion upon the part of both, but Lieutenant Putnam was too honorable to take advantage of his position. He felt that, although he could not restrain the affections of his heart, yet his duty to Colonel McHavens forbade that he should make any direct advances before first obtaining his consent.

And so, hand in hand, they went along, happy, hopeful, and trustful in the future.

The third day saw the trio well advanced on their way. The Yellowstone was veiled from view by the intervening woods, but they could hear the dull roar of its flow, and knew that they were on the right course. On the left a range of mountains towered far aloft, and as the sun sunk behind them, they had seen that their peaks were covered with snow. The wind that came from them was so chilly and penetrating that all shivered, and Lieutenant Putnam was apprehensive that they would be caught in some snow-storm.

They had halted in a sort of wooded valley, with high hills on every side of them, except toward the river. This did not shut out the wintry wind, and Adrienne, even with her Indian blanket wrapped about her, felt its effects.

"I think we shall have to have a fire," said the lieutenant, after it had grown fairly dark, and the cold seemed rather to increase than diminish.

"Ginger! I never was so shaky in my life, except when I had the fever and ague!" exclaimed Jabez, his teeth rattling like castanets.

"Do you think there will be any great risk in kindling a fire?"

"N-n-no!" he chattered; "we haven't seen a sign of an Indian to-day. I'll gather the fuel, and you get ready."

The Yankee set about it at once, while our hero cleared away a place that was greatly protected by the dense undergrowth, and then produced his match-safe.

"I have but one match left," said he, to Adrienne, with a laugh, "and suppose that misses fire?"

"I would not kindle a fire then," she replied. "We may need a fire more to-morrow night than we do now."

"Our case will not be hopeless," returned the young officer, "for we may get it from our gun-wadding."

So, in his cheery manner, he assisted in the preparations, and, when every thing was ready, drew his match upon his coat-sleeve, carefully inclosing the tiny flame with his hands, so as to protect it from the wind.

It flared up brightly, burned freely, and then suddenly expired, leaving them in utter darkness!

All were in dismay. What was to be done?

"Never mind; we'll try the guns," said our hero, with a gayety which had little reality about it.

"Hold on," said Spikes. "I used to carry matches in my pocket when the night was dark, and I had to take my lantern to see the way to Mary Ann Stiggins' and back again."

He fumbled around for several minutes.

"I have got a half-dozen pieces," he said, "but it will be jist my luck if they haven't any phosphorus—Ginger!"

One of them suddenly flashed out in the darkness. The lieutenant was ready, and a few minutes after they had a bright, warm fire, vigorously burning.

There was no lack of fuel, and so every thing seemed prosperous and pleasant. Adrienne wrapped herself up in her warm blanket, and lay down to her prayers, her meditations, and her quiet slumber.

"I do not feel sleepy," said our hero, to Jabez, "so I will sit up the first half-night with you, and then you can take your slumber—hello!"

He paused, aghast; for at that juncture, he discerned on the hill to the north of them the light of a large camp-fire, burning brightly.

"We have made a sad blunder," said the lieutenant; "there is a party of Indians, and they surely have seen us."

"Look yonder!" exclaimed Jabez, catching his arm, and pointing to the southward, where the light of a second fire was seen. "Ginger! we are surrounded by Indians, as sure as we are living!"

"Let's put out our camp-fire," added Lieutenant Putnam, in some consternation; "they will be down on us before we know it."

"Hold on," interposed Spikes; "there ain't any good in that. They know we're here, and if our fire goes out, they'll know, too, we have taken the alarm, and the jig will then be up, sure."

"What shall we do?"

"Not *that*."

"But we must do something; what shall it be?"

"Ginger! if I know."

"We must wake Adrienne, and try to steal out of here."

"I don't believe it can be done."

"But it will be madness to remain idle," added Lieutenant Putnam, almost angrily.

The Yankee said nothing, and the alarmed officer noticed that his eyes were fixed upon the white buffalo, that was browsing upon the grass in his usual contented manner.

"I am trying to think whether the Phenomenon can't help us out of this scrape," he finally added, as though he were addressing himself.

Lieutenant Putnam began to grow furious.

"This is all tomfoolery; there is only one thing we can do, and that is to make our way out of this infernal valley as quickly as possible."

And, without waiting to hear the reply of his comrade, he called to Adrienne, who awoke on the instant and joined them. She was speedily made acquainted with the alarming state of affairs, and she immediately united with her lover in urging that they should try to steal out of the dangerous trap in which they had been unwittingly caught.

"That point seems unprotected," she added, pointing to the westward, where all was dark; "let us hasten in that direction."

"The worst thing we could do," said Spikes, who deemed it high time for him to say something. "They'll expect us to try that, and there is where they will watch for us. No; we'll go in this direction," he remarked, as he pointed a little to the left of one of the camp-fires. "They won't expect us there, and we'll have the best chance."

This was wise, and they acted upon the suggestion without delay; but they had scarcely started, when a *third* camp-fire flashed up to view before them!

They halted in consternation. Matters were getting desperate. They were surrounded beyond a doubt, and they saw that escape was out of the question.

"We may as well give up," said Adrienne, in despair; "the savages are trifling with us for their own amusement."

"Never," added Lieutenant Putnam, in a low tone, as he pressed his beloved to him; "we will stand and fall together---"

"You don't see any chance?" said Spikes, looking inquiringly at the two.

"I am afraid not," candor compelled the young officer to say.

"None at all," added Adrienne, clinging to her over.

"Then, by ginger! I'll try the Phenomenon!" he exclaimed.

"Do any thing you choose," replied the lieutenant, in despair. "I offer no objection."

The stratagem that had entered the head of Jabez Spikes we may as well explain at this point:

Knowing the superstitious character of the American Indians, he determined to act upon it, by mounting astride his "Phenomenon," with a flaming torch in each hand, starting the buffalo off on a full run, and with him upon his back screeching like a panther, dash straight through the Indian camp!

"You'll see them scatter as though I were an exploding bomb-shell—yes, as though I were Vesuvius, Stromboli and Etna boiled down and running over among them! You must follow close behind me, and we'll all get through in safety."

But the scheme was so desperate that his friends refused to follow him. Had Lieutenant Putnam been alone, he might have attempted to do so, but he would not subject Adrienne to such a scene, which he was sure would result in no good to her.

Jabez begged, entreated, implored and finally said he would swear, but he was met with the same kind but firm denial.

"No," said the lieutenant, "we thank you for your interest in our behalf. You have proven more than once that you are brave and self-sacrificing, but we can not take part in this business."

"If you see the Indians scatter and leave an open path for you, will you follow?"

"Yes, certainly," replied our hero, smiling at his earnestness.

"Then, by ginger! it's a go!"

Admirable as was the training of the buffalo, it required considerable maneuvering before he would permit his owner to take his seat upon his back; but finally he stood still and Jabez took his seat, with a torch in each hand.

"Now be ready to follow!" he called to his friends, who were watching his movements with no little interest.

Away went the Phenomenon, as though Old Nick was indeed after him. He headed straight toward the camp-fire, which glowed on the hill to the north of them, and galloped up the declivity like a charger.

About this time Jabez Spikes began yelling, and such yelling! It was fearful, appalling, awful, indescribable! At the same time he swung the torches in the most curious gyrations, as he yelled, and screeched, and yelled.

The buffalo was wild with terror, and scarcely conscious of what he was doing. He headed straight toward the camp, thundering up the slope at full speed. His rider was powerless to direct him and did not make the attempt.

Now he neared the camp, and shadowy forms could be seen leaping aside out of the way of the fearful monster, and still Jabez yelled and swung his torches.

When the center of the camp was reached, the Phenomenon, concluding that the danger was passed, made an extra flirt of his tail, and kicked his hind-legs so high in air, that Jabez Spikes rolled off, and turned several back-somersets before he could check himself. Then leaping to his feet, he attempted to follow the buffalo, but, at this moment, he was seized and held with a grip of iron. Escape was impossible!

CHAPTER XIV.

CONCLUSION.

JABEZ SPIKES struggled in the grasp of his captor, but he was powerless.

"What in thunder is the matter?" demanded the well-known voice of Waufy, the trapper. "Can't you stop and speak to a feller?"

"Ginger! is that you?" exclaimed the delighted Yankee. "I thought you were an Indian; and are all these white men?"

"Take a look at 'em and see for yourself."

The glance showed a dozen or so men grinning and laughing most heartily; and all were of the same race as himself.

"This must be Colonel McHavens' party," exclaimed the delighted Yankee.

"That is just what it is and nothing else."

"Well, see here," added Jabez, in his hurried manner, "Lieutenant Putnam and Adrienne are down there, afraid to come up, thinking you are Indians. You go down after them, Waufy, while I go after my Phenomenon; he's too valuable for me to lose."

And without waiting to ask or answer any more questions, Jabez dashed away in pursuit of the white buffalo, while Waufy, wondering who "Adrienne" could be, went in quest of his young friend the lieutenant.

The surprise of Colonel McHavens can scarcely be imagined, when he saw Lieutenant Putnam escort his own cherished darling Adrienne to the camp and present her to him. For one moment they looked at each other, as if to make sure of their identity, and then the brave girl was inclosed in the arms of her father—the grim, fighting colonel.

And then, as his comrades gathered around Lieutenant Putnam, he related what the reader has long since learned—the embarking upon the steamboat, the massacre of the crew, the providential escape of our friends, their perilous journey, until they were now safe.

And our hero had something else to learn. The guide whom Captain Bennett had sent out to notify Colonel McHavens of the coming of the steamer, had reached the camp, and they at once set out to intercept it on the upper waters of the Yellowstone.

A few days later, Waufy came in camp with the announcement of the massacre of the escort that had been sent to meet Lieutenant Putnam, and the continued progress of the steamer up the Yellowstone. He made no mention of the lady he had seen on the boat, and almost forgot it.

Colonel McHavens struck the Yellowstone at a lower point than was originally intended, as he felt confident of reaching it ahead of the steamer, which, had Providence permitted,

would have ascended to a point fully a hundred miles above, and here he was now awaiting its coming, little dreaming of the terrible fate that had befallen his brother-in-law and his companions.

"What is the meaning of those other camp-fires?" asked our hero, pointing off to where the other lights could be seen shining.

"They're all ours; there ain't a red-skin near 'em."

"For what purpose are they kindled?"

"It's the work of old Bill Zigler an' me; thar have been a lot of varmints dogging us all day, and Bill kindled them fires, and is watchin' 'em both himself, while he's scouting around through there. He thinks by doin' that he kin bring a lot of the varmints so close that he'll git a chance to take some of us and pepper 'em."

Lieutenant Putnam did not exactly comprehend how this was to accomplish the desired purpose, but he asked no more.

"*Gee! whoa! haw! there! Ginger! why don't you mind, Phenomenon?*"

Every eye was turned where Jabez Spikes could be seen astride of his buffalo, and forcing him to come up to the camp-fire, by which he had dashed in such fury a few minutes before. The animal was not a little alarmed, but he obeyed, and finally halted a few steps away. He was as docile as a lamb under the control of his master.

A few weeks later Colonel McHavens and his command safely returned to the States, having successfully accomplished the purpose for which they were organized.

With them returned Jabez Spikes and his white buffalo, with which he at once began a tour of the country, having magnanimously relinquished all claim upon the love of Adrienne McHavens. His natural shrewdness and unquestionable ability made his speculation a success in every respect. He taught the buffalo numerous tricks, which, although very little in themselves, still sounded astounding as they appeared upon his flaming posters. He began on a very moderate scale, but as his receipts grew, so did his *personnel*; and by and by he had his large, red, painted, box-like wagon, with the pie

ture of a rampant white buffalo on the sides, top and bottom, and with a gig-top, in which he sat and held the reins of a span of fine horses.

Thus he sat and cracked his whip, one fine spring morning, and with a triumph that scarcely allowed him to keep his seat, he rattled into his native village, where his "agent" had plentifully put up his posters a few days before.

His success astonished even himself. The whole village seemed to be crowded under his tent, and almost the first person he saw was Mary Ann Stiggins; but the stunning bartender was not with her.

Hundreds crowded around Jabez to shake hands with and congratulate him, and he was decidedly the hero of the hour. By and by he made cautious inquiries about the bartender, and was gratified to learn that he was in state-prison, whither he had been sentenced for forgery.

Mary Ann looked so pale and so longingly at Jabez, that his heart relented, and he ventured to call upon her, after first housing up his Phenomenon for a week that he might visit the "old folks," and his numerous friends. Mary Ann received him warmly, their old love revived, and in due time, was consummated by a happy marriage.

Jabez continued in the "show business," for a couple of years, when the celebrated white buffalo died, and having made a moderate competence, he returned to his farm, with the purpose of remaining there forever after.

Lieutenant Putnam remained in the military service several years longer, being stationed most of the time on the frontier.

All this time, he maintained a correspondence with Adrienne McHavens, with the full approval of the father, who had seen enough of the young officer to appreciate his manly character and nobleness of heart.

And the sweet time came, when the beautiful girl uttered the marriage vows, and the happy couple began the journey of life together, with an unclouded sky and a roseate future, and to the enjoyment of these we now leave them.

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